

The Cenacle

עֲרֵךְ אֲדָמָה שֶׁנֶּחֱדָשׁ אֶת הַחַיִּים בְּכָל יוֹם יוֹם

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NUMBER 62 ❖ JUNE 2007

“Truth is a pathless land.”

—Jiddu Krishnamurti, 1929.

Letter to United States Senator Patty Murray (Democrat, Washington State)

June 5, 2007

Dear Senator Murray,

Since none of you in Washington are listening to anyone outside of the Beltway, take a look at the poll of your local paper there:

*Discontent Over Iraq Increasing, Poll Finds
Americans Also Unhappy With Congress*

*By Dan Balz and Jon Cohen
Washington Post Staff Writers
Tuesday, June 5, 2007*

Growing frustration with the performance of the Democratic Congress, combined with widespread public pessimism over President Bush's temporary troop buildup in Iraq, has left satisfaction with the overall direction of the country at its lowest point in more than a decade, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll.

Almost six in 10 Americans said they do not think the additional troops sent to Iraq since the beginning of the year will help restore civil order there, and 53 percent -- a new high in Post-ABC News polls -- said they do not believe that the war has contributed to the long-term security of the United States.

Disapproval of Bush's performance in office remains high, but the poll highlighted growing disapproval of the new Democratic majority in Congress. Just 39 percent said they approve of the job Congress is doing, down from 44 percent in April, when the new Congress was about 100 days into its term. More significant, approval of congressional Democrats dropped 10 percentage points over that same period, from 54 percent to 44 percent.

Much of that drop was fueled by lower approval ratings of the Democrats in Congress among strong opponents of the war, independents and liberal Democrats. While independents were evenly split on the Democrats in Congress in April (49 percent approved, 48 percent disapproved), now 37 percent said they approved and 54 percent disapproved. Among liberal Democrats, approval of congressional Democrats dropped 18 points.

Bush's overall job-approval rating stands at 35 percent, unchanged from April.

Many Democratic activists have complained that the 2006 midterm election results represented a call for a course change in Iraq and that so far the Democratic-controlled Congress has failed to deliver.

Deep public skepticism about Iraq, concerns about the Democrats and Bush, and near-record-high gasoline prices appear to have combined to sour the overall mood in the country. In the new poll, 73 percent of Americans said the country is pretty seriously on the wrong track, while 25 percent said things are going in the right direction.

That gap is marginally wider than it was at the beginning of the year and represents the most gloomy expression of public sentiment since January 1996, when a face-off between President Bill Clinton and a Republican-controlled Congress over the budget led to an extended shutdown of the federal government.

Among the nearly three-quarters of Americans expressing a pessimistic viewpoint, about one in five blamed the war for their negative outlook, and about the same ratio mentioned the economy, gas prices, jobs or debt as the main reason for their dissatisfaction with the country's direction. Eleven percent cited "problems with Bush," and another 11 percent said "everything" led them to their negative opinion.

The new poll showed that Americans have recalibrated their view of who is taking the lead in Washington. Earlier this year, majorities of Americans said they believed that the Democrats were taking the initiative in the capital, but now there is an even split, with 43 percent saying Bush is taking the stronger leadership role and 45 percent saying the Democrats are.

That shift occurred across the political spectrum. In April, 59 percent of independents said Democrats were taking a stronger role, but that figure has dropped 15 points, to 44 percent.

The political machinations over the Iraq war funding bill have been the dominant news event in Congress for much of the spring, and the Democrats' removal of the provision linking funding to a withdrawal deadline came shortly before the poll was taken.

In April, the public, by a 25-point margin, trusted the Democrats over Bush to handle the situation in Iraq. In this poll, Democrats maintained an advantage, but by 16 points. There has been an erosion of support for Democrats on this issue, but not a corresponding movement to Bush. Among independents, trust for the Democrats is down eight points, mostly because of a six-point bump in the percentage who said they trust "neither."

Congressional Democrats also are preferred over Bush -- whose own approval ratings remain near career lows -- on immigration (by 17 percentage points), the economy (by 18 points) and even, albeit narrowly, on handling the U.S. campaign against terrorism (by six points).

But it is the war in Iraq -- the most important issue in the 2006 campaign -- that has the most potential to reshape the political landscape.

Overall, 61 percent in this poll said the war was not worth fighting, and nearly two-thirds said the United States is not making significant progress restoring civil order in Iraq. However, there is no such general agreement about what to do.

In this poll, 55 percent -- a new high -- said the number of U.S. military forces in Iraq should be decreased, but only 15 percent advocated an immediate withdrawal of American troops. An additional 12 percent said U.S. forces should be out of Iraq sometime this year.

Since the Iraqi parliamentary elections in November 2005, consistent majorities of Americans have said U.S. troops should be drawn down; support for an immediate, complete withdrawal has also remained relatively stable, never exceeding two in 10. And there similarly has been little change across party lines: 25 percent of the Democrats surveyed wanted all American military forces out of Iraq now, compared with 13 percent of independents and 6 percent of Republicans, with all percentages about the same as in late 2005. Support for the immediate removal of U.S. forces peaked at 32 percent among African Americans.

Public attitudes about the size of U.S. military forces in Iraq and about the war more generally are closely related to views about the centrality of the situation in Iraq to the broader battle against terrorism, another flashpoint between Bush and congressional Democrats. (In this poll, nearly six in 10 agreed with the Democratic position that the two are separate issues.) Overall, more than seven in 10 of those who said Iraq is an essential component of the terrorism fight wanted U.S. troop levels in Iraq to be increased or kept the same, while more than seven in 10 of those seeing the issues as separate thought that some or all troops should be withdrawn. Among independents who said the United States can succeed against terrorism without winning in Iraq, 70 percent supported decreasing troop levels, compared with 23 percent of those who saw victory in Iraq as pivotal.

This Post-ABC News poll was conducted by telephone May 29 to June 1 among a random sample of 1,205 adults. Results from the full poll have a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points. Sampling error margins are higher for subgroups.

Polling analyst Jennifer Agiesta contributed to this report.

The country is angry and restless and disappointed. Democrats swept in on a tide of hope, and have failed to live up to promises made and expectations raised. Your party has all but lost the liberal base, and the prospects for the 2008 elections look far grimmer than they should.

It is time to end the Occupation. Not in September, not when your Republican colleagues come around, and everyone can hold hands and do it together. It is time to end it now. I assure you that it is not in Bush-Cheney's interests to do so, as they do not yet have their oil sharing agreement, nor have they abandoned their plan for invading Iran and taking their oil too.

I have respected your politics in the past. I would like to think well of you again. Unlike your Washington State colleague, Senator Cantwell, you are

generally well-regarded by progressives in Washington State. If she does not move to the left where her constituency is, she will not serve long in the Senate. But you may, and I hope you do. At least I did, and hope to again.

The Occupation of Iraq is a crime against humanity, against the world, and you are now participating in it with your latest vote. I urge you to put aside your career interests, your pollsters, your big money donors, and look again at the pictures and read the accounts of what has been done in the United States' name over there. And I hope never to hear again that you have used any pathetic excuse for continuing that situation for a single hour longer than it takes to pull American troops out. As of your latest vote, the blood of the dead and wounded is now all over your hands.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raymond Forland Jr." The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Raymond" being the most prominent.

Seattle, Washington

www.airamericaradio.com



Progressive Political Talk

The Cenacle

NUMBER 62 ❖ JUNE 2007

Edited by Raymond Souland Jr. 

Assistant Editor: Kassandra Souland

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Seattle, Washington



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Thanks to the people scattered in cities and towns the world over who don’t believe that human beings must tribe up and war on, to those who are contributing—if not to the dawning of some new age that may or may not come, may or may not be in the cards, so to speak—to the daily betterment of life on earth for all creatures. There are many who are doing this, and their acts don’t often make the headlines of the bloodstain-hungry corporate media, but they affect lives, affect the world by inches and miles every single day. If a new age ye long for, say it began this morning and ask yourself how you are celebrating and preserving it . . .

EVICITION NOTICE

NOTICE TO TERMINATE TENANCY



To: George W. Bush
From: The People
Date: Way Past Due

George W. Bush, you are hereby notified to vacate the White House immediately. This notice applies to all related members of your administration. We the people have made clear, in our millions, our opposition to your acts and opinions during your terms as President. We declare NOT IN OUR NAME to endless war and repression. Your right to inhabit this residence is immediately terminated.

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Many Musics

(first series)

*“Fate isn’t what we’re up against
there’s no design, no flaws to find”*
—The Shins,
“Young Pilgrims,” 2003.

i. Many Musics

Many musics, wake, blink, call it a world.
Wake, blink, call it your world, leave dream’s
warped glare, exhale, return. Sing true,
many musics, through the day’s tasks,
through its troubles, from some kind
year, its elusive face, to another’s heart
liquid cracking hungry into wood, shouting
dancers, full moon’s frenzied lean.

Skins & gazes lain with, the forever of
a few ragged nights in high voice & stout,
a dance’s tavern memory still wooden with
heat. Later a new elixir & follow the
fire along an extra mile, mind gleeful tuck
in deeper & burst around wide, many
musics coming faster. Sing true! How the
night loses nothing to its great brood of years!

I want because I know none other.
I sing because truth lets me no other
way. Many musics, danced by the hard
muscles of Art, the burning arc of
fists & fingers, the discordance of worlds
candied together by love’s ceaseless puzzle.
Wake, blink, reck the miles left in your
heart, years in your thighs. Sing true. Go!

ii. Dis-illusion

Midnight when the quiet parts &
the way splits out to light, come
to me, path, I am hardly more
than just another who wakes &
does not know, who loves & does
not know, who wants & does not
know. I dream this world, it turns
by wood & steel, & I do not know.

The way is called dis-illusion,
molten new press to go.

The brown air of many days parts
as I move through, there is a
brutal report. Is it dream or is it
me? Who clutches & falls in the
next moment? Who lets go the sweat
of life's many plain hours & its
several golden ones? What now, as
neither do? If so, whereon?

The way is called dis-illusion, far
scatter of songs, raw will to chase on.

iii. Bridge of Glass

Dis-illusion, & how far? Til the shine &
 every soft memory is a revealed setpiece?
 What truth is enough, covers all, sinks
 wide & high enough? Could the pink bloom
 in hand another sure way to the sweet,
 staying place? Do you know? Would
 that gauze near your cheek be any
 dearer if proven true or prop?

I am asking because this bridge
 of glass shows a river below & it
 looks real enough, but what is enough?
 Which humbles the heart more: beliefs
 honed to a few or disbelief seeping
 through? My ragged hurry through this world
 trails shadows & dust yet I wonder what
 moves the world but a greater arc half arisen?

iv. Sweet Reveal

World sodden with many story, long
 with shitting grace, little but continuance,
 none, can you imagine a new stroke
 or sin? Little, none. Yet the seed pops,
 the stripling caterwauls, another to
 the bricks, mapless, every face its
 wanting tale, flesh surround, divert,
 distract, what was it anyone said
 but the present hour's least hungry truth?

Reck a scent you do not know or
 bear. Follow its fenceless path,
 tell nobody, lose a little, & a little more,
 bring something back.

v. Song Brute

Many musics, the blind suck of
 want, moonlight's bright cluster of
 nagging old stories, not a spasm happily
 sniffed but the next. I look this
 one to that one & say give it, now
 more, maybe hope that some
 human tongue better than mew & bleat.
 Breach the gift of a wide open eye in love.

Give it, not to a bent idea called God,
 not for blood & brethren's familiar train.
 Rouse the six warm curves of a square,
 hit a beat to dream's paradox of time.
 This want is old, old, maybe even
 moonlight's coarse sire, gift to a
 world raised of toneless clay, missing
 dear its greater arc of explain.

I look to this one & that one with
 this question, flaming spire of doubt:
 What buries, what lingers, what travels on?
 Give it, & another, til you really learn how.

vi. Preach

A singer reminds me to praise God,
 loved shaping hand of all, sweet holy
 in every lost hour's crash, coming
 fruit in the artist's blooming stroke,
 what common pours wild in buzz, wing,
 cruellest shot's report. Praise God &
 trust to life's fine arc home, where little
 explains & less needs to. Praise God &
 submit to the sting. I listened an hour,
 midst the ricochet of my sins
 & scars, & the next remembered, &
 the next grasped, & the next looked
 on for some new song.

vii. Eros Burst

To love them all, has love's fruit in
 miracle kept its ripe? I ask when the
 hour is plastic passage among unconscious
 rooms. I ask when the highest ideas
 consume barren within, when hunger is
 answered by a coin & a ruby slip. When
 love's fruit itself seems little more than
 a shill for king's going suck, little more, scrape
 it, little more, a least cove of ice & a coming sun.

viii. Bleating Noise

Always the armies cross & a king smiling,
 strokes his soft private maps, & reck
 his pride to stand tallest bone, swill
 the leaning hustle to his word, come dirty
 & brief when his hand spreads kindly,
 when his smile an hour laps the world,
 hear it moan, his gift. Hear it cry, his legend.

ix. Psychotropic

Only disbelief in nothing.
 Only the sweet hustles of high & departure.
 Only music's raining arc through flesh & dream.
 Only heart's liquid crack as raw memory twice doubles.
 Only this elixir will crumble you into the greater green.
 Only you will know what else, & how.

x. *Heretic*

Love maybe the push back, awhile,
an hour of guideless will, two branches
twine without trunk below, fruit to come.

The way is called dis-illusion, coarse,
frantic path between the ears, hour ends,
new choice blows life's next caustic spend.

xi. *Smudging Hour*

Toward songs without roof to comfort,
shape, limit. A stage without seats to
regard. Little listens, wish the stars would.
A crowd of face fatly ricochets the hours,
slow gathered wicked of wait, caterwaul
life's fine dullness, little listens, wish the leaves
could shake sweeter for notice. Toward songs
left in the depths, become the tugged to
their lightless home. Little listens, & sometimes grateful.

xii. Portrait in Silhouette

What lights toward the distant road,
 its steady, leaning traffic, hustle to next,
 little wrapped in cafe's talky noise & trinket's
 shine, stretch the hour, twice double, stretch
 til back to the brutes & on to the stellar
 remains, stretch it within til touch both
 spheres & what of the hidden third, &
 out to the skies where all is ferment
 & strew. A breath. Another. A dream.

The light bears two lovers, they grumble
 in passing. Horizon & twilight their duel.
 One the twine you hunger. One the hard leap out.

xiii. Zurich Dada

Everything is God.
 Everything is Shit.
 Shit is God.
 God shits Many Colors.
 Everything is Many Colors.
 Steal These Words. Go!

xiv. Berlin Dada

We acknowledge what we know.
 We believe in what we recognize.
 We are tender with old rhythms.
 We sing sex so sweet in middle range.
 We hate what begs for a new mind.
 We rage within if any come too near.
 We dream but only a few may know.
 We will drown in a catastrophe of dust.
 We will sink into a black bed of tears.

xv. Hannover Dada

A long finger from the reddest star
 farthest, ever arriving, waited letter
 from a lost, fond year, & here it comes,
 no longer red or purple, here arriving,
 with stamps from everywhere, here it is,
 & 4 a.m., all is lost, wait til dawn to read?
 This long finger's message will not last, will
 melt into you, you are insane, it is your friend.

xvi. Cologne Dada

It was time to go. We were fit &
 raising high smoke again. Shared
 fins as our map, my limbs recovered
 & shining within. I had tried to love
 everyone there but some ate others,
 & it was explained this is how, this
 is why, our God smiles, this goes on.

xvii. New York Dada

What end for flesh but dream
 of another. Thin minds call it prison
 but flesh settles, calls it happiness.

xviii. Le Ballet Mecanique

The end of the world
 like the end of this hour
 a sugar promise & illusion.

xix. Another Torrent

A hand lights toward every possible
 hour, what trembles by its unchoosing,
 what world in its own shadow dissolves?
 In the disappearing glare roars some
 other universe. A choice, one face remembered
 to another's decay, a thousand flaps, & gone.

xx. New Prayer

God the burn inside your cheek
 the shout beneath your soil's dreaming
 the retch that sickens, & free.

xxi. Much Sentiment

Remembering old loves:
 raw flesh of want on ice.
 Bury it in words & days:
 let distraction bone its cage.
 What remain? The ride untaken.
 What haunt? Desire's hard stoke out.

xxii. Siege

The war & years til the blooms,
change of season & song, it lives
among us. Blooms, pink with new
breath, red by bones open push, white
in fallen lids leaving. Many blooms,
slowly strange, so breathe lighter.
Soil's dream reminding, stop fucking sleeping.

xxiii. Simple

Ask the swaying green light,
do you really mean go?
Where the freedom in yes?

Ask the summer-stilled red,
do you really mean stop?
What if nobody does? Are you ready?

If the lights fall, when they hit,
are you ready?

xxiv. Bed's Silence

Want is every soul's plight,
 love every soul's dream,
 you wear some hard fancy of mine,
 & carry it always in your deeps.
 You accumulate me in ways I
 do not know. I bear some rightly
 shade from your grasp, carry it
 through rueful city streets, not
 chalice but a rhythm, not word
 but a hum. Every soul's dream,
 every soul's plight, what swings through
 laws of men, mocking, urging, leaving go.

xxv. Spark

Call it the source, & from it ideas of dirt
 & stardust. Call it the treachery of want,
 of awake, of any. Nothing salves the closest
 wounds. Tell it to another, to a year,
 to a race. What slides to, & on, which breaches
 vining, what's more than another seed,
 another fruit? Answer in rare hours, or the rest.

xxvi. Wedge

Faith crackles unknown every hour,
 held close with longest feathers & a
 few sparkling memories. Dawn through
 a muddy windshield, a familiar heat
 in a crowd of shouting, thumping flesh.
 Hours silent green touch among hands,
 pinkest gentle shared breath. Alone
 again but changed for every change.
 May it stretch to the last, what I believed
 when I kissed you behind the torn
 hotel, cruisers snarling the neon dusk.

xxvii. Washed Clean with Ice

What reels & swipes at new hours worst
 but the blind 'croach of hungry gone
 ones, nights in the ragged heat of
 velvet cafes, brown-backed chairs &
 red divans stained with lost chatter &
 dry strain. Listen to this day harden

for a little more secret juice & that
 night queer violently over a single word
 & its stretching silence. Reck every
 troubled hour's cry to resume, to
 unfence from its clumsy arrival
 & sudden cut. The few pretty ones

worse, sunny glad, every angle a
 mirror to happy eating flickers of
 sate, every melody a brush
 down moonshine's own bright strands,
 every thrust makes a richer moan,
 & the candied embrace, & the laughter follows.

xxviii. Nothing But

Mapless, a swamp of half-blind thrashing
 hours, nothing the soiled gulls or grubbing
 squirrels could say, not a tongueless shepard
 shoved by his fear through the shouting,
 burning night, nor how every skyline's fist
 of men will fall to its bleating, ending year.
 A sleepy babe's nipple kiss causes private
 perfect crooning, what century, what the land?

Mapless, blind-red wings toss toward low clouds
 & then splashing bombs of beak's grab & throat's
 take, leaves yellow again in unseen places, &
 a king promises new peace with a musing wink
 to those tapping his collar & readying his place
 in the stars. Need this song land plainly
 to reveal its blank clock-face, its some
 & every where, invocation whatever will help?

Mapless, what buries, what lingers, what
 sneering gathers its lace & its dew,
 maybe a coin back to the last familiar room
 or one for the next? Blind the steps of
 every creature, every pending stump & kiss.
 Nothing but next & next, a pink hour
 close & sings its gladness, a copper dusk
 when the gunfire runs near, & strangely far away.

xxix. *Wide Open Eye in Love*

What near in that grey half-sprung bed,
 a hue, maybe a face, a voice? A hand
 shivers in the whiskers of nocturnal glow,
 for a moment nearer, then years far,
 then never was & ain't will be. Memory of
 a memory, pink corona want sunk down
 a shaft webby with despair. How lace
 slid by, how flesh made flesh gape
 in awe! Desire notices, desire mulls.
 Desire collides, desire bleeds. Desire goes.
 Here's the twist: desire remakes its world
 from tatters & teeth. Nods, lifts, comes again.

xxx. *Upon*

[*Mark Rothko, "Yellow over Purple," oil on canvas, 1956*]

Signs rain years' hopes & crumble with
 repeat, crumble, crumble. A joyous hour's
 ash, shadows turn dusk, plain solids
 fall away, what remains is the desire
 to divide & consume. Will to a face or idea
 folds down, with a cry or soft. Night's better
 sense reveals in its absence & silence.

xxxix. *Flat*

[Paul Cézanne, "Mr. Sainte-Victoire," oil on canvas, 1888-1890]

From a far view, things may cohere from
 crumble to lesson to fruit. Flat hours
 with nothing like a sugared tongue may
 start to jitter a bit like music. The
 rainstorm takes us up in its forgetting
 sweep of power & now a salmon-colored
 mountain where there was an argument.
 This squall will settle us up ahead, a meal,
 a collector. This hour is a gift of colored
 glass, a fed beast's view that little disturbs.

xxxix. *Nightmare*

[Claude Monet, "Water Lilies," 1919, oil on canvas]

The end was in water, in knowing
 that arrival & departure not the
 same way, but a high arc of drying,
 feeling it all go, the sacks of juice
 dwindling, still hands gesturing, still
 cloaks & gowns, still somewhere a
 candied murmur, laws of men dust
 now, my world without end, dust now,
 no fragrance remains but my sweat for
 next, for nothing, for how you watch me go.



To be continued in Cenacle | 63 | December 2007

THE GREEN MAN



BURNING MAN 2007

AUGUST 27 TO SEPTEMBER 3
BLACK ROCK CITY

PO Box 884688
San Francisco, CA 94188
Hotline: 415-TO-FLAME
<http://www.burningman.com>

Ric Amante



Ecuador Hotel

IV

Federico was pleased that the enigmatic fellow lodger had chosen the ferry terminal as a rendezvous. The waterfront was one of the few places in the city that appealed to him. The expanse of water, whether smooth and overspread with a mantle of fog or rough and bursting with whitecaps, was a dependable tranquilizer. He often sat at the end of one of the commercial piers—#87, Hinckley’s Marine Supply—away from the benches, potted marigolds, and smear of tourists. The “PRIVATE PROPERTY—NO TRESPASSING” sign he ignored. Were a security guard or worker to confront him, he would act perplexed, speak Spanish, move along—a strategy he had not needed to employ thus far. Indeed, Federico felt that the purity of one’s intentions created a safety zone that blessed the practitioner with a supernatural power commensurate to the force required to continue the journey. Consequently, in situations where it was crucial that one not be observed, Federico, if his spiritual energies were properly attuned, would be invisible. Most would regard this as nonsense, if not insanity, but most do not sit for hours with no thoughts, with nothing to activate the energy that seeks embodiment, creating the forms that cerebration initiates. Yes, the sea was an ancient ally whose power was wordlessly transcendent. It was teacher, catalyst, blue-green blood of the cosmos, and so to sit with it this lovely morning before meeting Skype was, for Federico, a necessary and quite literal “no-brainer.”

V

Skype, Federico—two unlikely contenders for a halo of communion. Connected at the third eye on the third floor where slats of afternoon light are golden spears breaking to rectangles upon a frayed red runner. Sharing a transient heart, renegade body, mystic mind. Knocked sideways by the world's woes, but walking an alternative to despair. Veering from neither dark nor delight, steering by moonlight and sweat. Approaching restlessness not as curse or defect but as higher accountability. Wrangling with how to live, who to run with, where to face when sky goes blank. Repeating, refining, and refuting the cycles by not turning away, not giving in, not forgetting to begin again . . . And yet . . . and yet . . . and yet the petitions to God and oneself to disconnect the ecstatic but furious wires are still summoned. The apprenticeship to truth—not the one self-administered and vitiated by indulgence, redundancy, avoidance—is slow going. Too often countering the midday glare of doubt and barrenness with an easy slide. Not that perfection or enlightenment were achievable, but that the holiness of full consciousness is a crooked ladder whose bottom rungs Federico and Skype knew by heart. And each needed a boost to the next level, each needed an external force to neither enhance nor compliment the other but rather generate a deeper understanding of the cosmos, and the words and deeds to honor it. Federico, Skype—two strangely formidable outcasts beating a path to a workingman's and dreamer's hotel in a northern city by the sea, two strands of a frayed helix whose joyous replication is precise, timely, unknowable. Trains, birds, faces, rooms all narrowing to this meeting by the waterfront where the steady lap of waves against the creosote pilings brings Federico back to the task at hand.

Judih Haggai



silence is my jailer

got me locked up behind firewalls
huge invisible blocks of silence
trapped within, my spirit sits

some call it meditation
i know the truth

imprisoned by fallacies
silence is my jailer
no key, no password, no

been here a while
scratched out days turn to weeks
waiting for godot, prince charming, rapunzel
waiting
my hair falls out, my nails turn to sand

mummified scarabs encircle my dungeon
clicking of emptiness, tapping of void
mute words keep me company
i can hear myself think

my sentence undetermined
i send my meager self into motion
twirling the infinite moment
non-motion matched by non-desire

elevating the pulse

established, I'm breathing
ingested, coffee, water, tea
enjoyed, miles davis, poetry, sighs
elevating my pulse with psychic connections to you
listen to my voice
my mind signals
as i receive messages
absorb, elevate the pulse, the wavelengths
spiced with cinnamon
catalyst intensity
loving touches and surreal promises
distant embraces
we bridge with fine-tuned reception
connected once more

Friday Epiphany

Friday epiphany
never mind

Friday aftermath
empty mind

epiphany comes
no requests taken
and just as swiftly
departs

leaving a ripple in its wake
a shake-up and a smile
a new tolerance for reality
a new view of hues

silently the mind breathes light

the impossible search for my inner tibetan book of the dead

i crave dam burst understanding
letting it slide
in my sweet lord hari krishna assurety

i want to blend into the allness, the oneness, the whole
i want to shed my divisions
join the all-knowing

it's a search
an impossible search
for my inner tibetan
my book of the dead
my ohm and my enlightenment
not mine
not me
my search for the not mine
but the cosmic all

a search that is doomed to fizzle
as i search, i cling to me
when the thing sought is not

somebin's goin on

why is the heaviness of silence
like an unmade bed
a postponed phone call
a nagging something i haven't done?

does silence hold a reprimand
an authoritarian finger
a disdainful frown?

what is contained in this moment
that rubs me wrong
that pushes me out the door

somebin's goin on
and silence contains reminders
somebin's goin on

(unmailed letter, unwritten e-mail, unspoken word)
do i grab the silence and wrap it round my heart
in blessing and chiffon twirled freedom?
or do i sit in discomfort, squirm in reproach
wait for the coin to drop in place

present yourself, present.
do it, say it, get it out

while i meanwhile shrug
trying to shake your hinted presence
hand in hand with knowing glances

a day in the life

a day in the life
 my grandmother had such a day
 listening to the sounds of seagulls
 swarming the skies of coney island

such is my mind
 a coney island dressed in laundry lines
 fallout shelters
 ficus and lemon trees

my airspace is resplendent in yawns
 saturday morning neighbours
 walls paper thin
 voices relaxed uninhibited

we know our sounds
 saturday morning familiarity
 soon the espresso will awaken the mind
 yeast will call for bread making
 children will ask for lunch

my grandfather knew these sounds
 his brooklyn streets ripe with bagels
 long park benches
 a day to ponder the voices of others

my son knows days like these
 city strange accents
 bizarre shots and SUV engines
 ears cocked crooked, time zone twisted diagonal

from yawn to yawn
 we carry on
 DNA hit parade
 we shoot, we score, we generate

saturday morning
 pause between weeks
 past edging further
 future creeping closer

heart clinging to hang on

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Things Change?

[Six Thresholds]
a new fixation

Part Five

*"We have drunk the Soma;
we have become immortal;
we have gone to the light;
we have found the gods."
—Rig Veda, c. 1000 B.C.*

Something, a kind of word, somewhat of shine, winter's blue steel cold, a game, a cosmos,
time's fabeling play?

Something, from somewhere, what has not wrecked, faded failed fallen, a kind of word,
hark its shine, endless fancies.

Yes. Now sip from your cup. Again. Rising a ray at a time, test each seeming solid step twice.
This far & urge toward farther. Urge nigh madness toward farther.

Sip, & again. Heating with songs
furies, remember the flow within.
What? Whatever. Some of that too.

Thinking toward what place the many books of this fixation has in this or the many
kinds of worlds. News of it somewhat more broadcast tho still it sits obscure more
often in its crumbly binders.

I am conduit between what is my world & this fixation's. The two cross but do
not align. I am their conjoin.

Every world is some other world's fable as much as its own. The essence of a world
is what cannot be strained out by time, religion, polity, even Nature.

To move deeper into this fixation while not ceding what meaningful place I bear in
my own world's infinitely strandsy fable.

I'm learning to admire gutsy bastards for how they strike out where most cower.
I want to write like that, & again.

Come from the stars & bound there again hereafter? So I keep reading, so many

claim. Is it a thought for comfort to a race lonely at the world's feast? Not enough
to swallow the world & be pleased, too deep-down uncertain

there is a language in snow clung to cliffs, in overcast dusks, in the strange passage
of something resembling time—

Many worlds rest within & along & inside each other—hugging, clashing—more
& more & question's roar—

Running hard & difficult with the we-desire—all souls move alone yet—there is
obscure, deep poem in all things, the sweet chorale of we does not fail to return
in new guise, what melds deep in the night does not release unchanged into the flicking
daylight—

Bound seeming mortal in a net of imposed fables, truly no song of the world righter
than any other. Some conjures for crush, some for flight, some for the deepest fullmoon
ecstasy—

Crossed against the general grovel brings on a greater bitter with the years, washes
over papers & through the waves—

No answers in bed or book, the snow falls with cold little nips tonight uninvited,
unexplained—

“The answer is other” cracks one—
“All some & none of the above” says another—

Luna T's Cafe rolls on to the ocean, into the woods, wild through time—a spaceship
of a kind, a vessel on seas—a sprawl among the kosmos—it contains no single vital
story anymore—

to find my pen's way through it demands acquiring ways I do not yet possess—the
pages add slowly—

I try—try—try more—

Night wet & cold, & funny, & it challenges me to join anew & anew,
among the many songs, & little can I resist, the more I open out the more pours
though me, my scattered days & hours & years resemble meaning & this
fat sheaf of pages matters, & while I cannot be new neither shall I be old,
something other seems more right, for the rage in my veins is thrashing & unkempt
like always, & the love for both smooth & burn is ever high—

The night drizzles cool & wet & I think: up the dose & I think: twine
the many musics & I am willing to service all creation with my pen

if I have to conjure the big night for a hundred pages or more & it takes days
or weeks I shall—

Big night, oh yah, that idea, perhaps I said it aloud one night at Luna T's Cafe, some words of it went around, I think, it went past me in any respect & I started hearing it told to me like some new idea, & I suppose it is, not what I was thinking, not much, it much more now even as a few lines & days pass, it's more as its origins smear & gone, so if you see a poster or hear mention you'll know it began here but has no end yet thought—

I think: some people, some worlds more sugar than others, some creatures languish however served up, pretty & smoking, it's not enough, music doesn't happen because hands & air will them easily,

In an empire gorged of variety, sweet musical moves are the more prized—the jackels conjure for formula & ease, the wide expectation leans back,

a true note rarely comes forth.

A big night will be many things,
I suppose.

at some point I had to notice them playing again—I suppose it was inevitable—I'm sitting more with these pages, the band wants something to do too—

the bar opens its doors again, too, sort of, pouring liquids not commercial or easily high-inducing—

Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker sits still at his stool, his coffee at hand, uncertain if it contains bourbon anymore—

“There is no tomorrow left to conjure. The devils themselves artily arrange a perpetual night ever-lit by their mesmerizing craft—

“None too real nor bright the stars above, more an exoticist's fanciful flourish—

“The Lord has come & manifests dully in all things. The lord urges marketplace prosperity as a bane to y'souls!

“Dreams abide in long careful cages & desire is ever herded toward a vanilla familiarity—

“Must we all be sodden to see with unruined eyes the broken splendor about us? Must we concede to the devils the meat of our thinking, the thrust of our prayers, the deeper teeth of our want?

“I beseech no God upon this fair & foul domain. None need be summoned nor hailed. The God our race becomes in breaking into life’s essence & distributing unevenly its rewards & revelations. The God our race manifests as cracker & shaper & life-&-death-monger!

“None God need try to seize governance of this twisted realm. God we are in what small ways we mercy & make, & in what greater ways we harrow & hew!”

Noisy Children will even leave the bandroom door open & play to that rant and its kin sometimes—

Knickerbocker approaches a glowing beast at times, not able to say if he lives ordinary as a man yet since none see him come & go—save Mr. Bob the barman whose word on this matter is none—

Noisy Children want to play again no matter the Cafe’s spinning into other dimensions & realities—their fans keep showing up, too, so rockshows return to the Cafe & when big night, a or the or both, begins if it hasn’t, there will be a very loud soundtrack—

for nothing left to do on these pages but write them stellar fuck nutty again—the times need a press beyond dichotomies, a push for deeper thinking of water & rhythm—

Noisy Children accelerates its music to find again the moment & chase through it to many others—

I sit in the corner writing that’s all I really like to do now or ever—sit there trying to tell the story while figuring what it might be—

the sunsets some nights make it in, cover my table, so bright my page is blind as I fill it—

if must I will sit on the floor to write true notes anymore—sit lie crawl—but I don’t think that true notes wish for submission so much as greater wield of power—show I’m near 40 not 17, show I’m still 17 in ways that matter raw & rootless—

I listen to them jam & figure only more good will come of this—

Mr. Bob the barman has long kept the Cafe running while I was elsewhere & nowhere, Rich, Rebecca, Franny too—he considers his place at the near end of the Cafe’s business yet did not counter the blunt end of commercial liquor selling—

“I gave my piece to the bottle, & I lost a great deal to it. I took behind the bar for the comfort that I can offer when the mug fails. I know what it’s like down there. I still dream about it. Rich hired me to tend bar & he meant it. *Tend* bar.”

So he tends, & I notice Franny helps him. He does the serving & the listening, she does something else. She keeps a few books around, works the jukebox & radio, allows TV in & then ushers it out like a lush enjoyed but nightly vamoosed—

A kind of hard comfort between the two of them—a welcome, provisions, warm words, but more—intuition, laughter, kin making—

Rebecca is returned as am I from other places & doings—she watches her dad’s band play & draws—looking for the deep matter, showing me little but kissing me hard & often—she never remembers we’re 7 years not 7 days married—

“I’ll keep chasing you as hard,” she says. “It doesn’t end for me” pause “but there’s always more to it with you, that’s why we do it—you keep leading me elsewhere”

I nod. She looks at me hard & starts drawing with two hands—it matters—

“it always did” she says—

it always did matter—these pages, their story, my pen—always mattered during the worst days—

always mattered—always hurt—always meant enough to continue—

I think about the cities I’ve lived, hardly one life rightly called, Washington Street in downtown Boston where I was so often running for trains & looking for places to write, & soft hands, few or none found, but ten years I tried—

Pioneer Square in Portland how often I sat on its brick steps & was lonely & grateful—its Christmas tree moved me—I so wanted to be home there forever—I live there now, this moment, don’t know why—but ask me my home I say Portland, Oregon—as once I said Boston—as once I said Hartford—

Hartford too—a place I’ve left & returned to several times—each with diminishing fondness—nothing new here—the hustlers breed & accumulate year by year—bastards holding the levers keep things squeezed tight—city pride measured by numbers—yet once I loved here—I guess what once this place was—

Black Rock City—my other home than Portland, nearly as far—

Where my Art sizzles tis from the love unchoosing I live & the desperateness sometimes constant I endure—the world is fake, a stage, vibrations yet move about in it enough years & its hooks, teeth clasp & claim—

By memory one knows the past, by wish the future—Now, like home & love, is more verb than aught else—light & sound pass, blood & bile work away, dreams thrust & cajole—bits of me recall a thousand moments of sensation I can rarely prove exist—

a coffeeshop north of Boston where I read & wrote in a corner, became a kind of stray welcomed & supped—

a museum in Chicago I romanced for a week—not wanting to leave its many-roomed sweep of visual excitements—

late night buses in Portland, rode them from jobless days at the downtown library—heart crushed yet beating for lack of other task—

moments over years in a restaurant's back room where friends sung & chanted & laughed & renewed—

This story has traveled through these places & I know not whither next—

in truth I write for love & desperateness mostly none else is native—maybe a who or where at moments—but mostly it's me alone on a fucking bus wondering how will I pull it off this time—

& I will—I do—Luna T's Cafe coheres again in my mind—I slowly remember how to write this—how to write everything—

no choice, my rationale over & over—no fucking choice—

Years ago I thought ending these stories was the brave act—I think now it's not stopping, letting the music go out more variously & wild & clean—

Once, high, I approached trees through snow—the snow interested me—I wanted to stop but I had to take a picture—it was a mild grey winter's day—the campus was decorated with pretty girls & boys—I'd come to see a freaky French cartoon—

snow was cold pudding to walk through—sky a dour grey sea—trees barelimbed loomed perfect architecture—

when the darkness later came I was miles away on a hill overlooking a highway—in the other direction was an obscure valley, frozen waterway, tangled descent into trees & bushes—I lobbed snowballs at cars & felt arrived—cold, no dwelling, yet there I was, weightless with glee—

big night, what of it, we know at least that Noisy Children will rock it how & somehow—Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker will be there, served his drink by Mr. Bob the barman & assured by Franny Americus—

“That war was a vial thing”

“It was, Doctor”

“I have observed that when human governance leans too bluntly on denial or intolerance, one set upon or against another, bloodshed is the inevitable antidote”

Franny listens, her purples glow near neon when she's thinking. "I grew up in pretty rural Georgia. Most folks divided along money lines not color ones. Didn't help to be female neither."

"In the larger story, the truth is opposite"

"Larger story?"

Knickerbocker, strangely sedate, nods. **"The one denizens here are beginning to scrutinize in earnest."**

"Oh."

"I await returns" he adds, sips from his cup, & says no more.

larger story from one moment to another, one place, the next, one person, now more, larger story & what primary myths & songs color it—

led by bureaucrats, fanatics, & thieves, by those whored out numb & the rest wishing for white chargers & stakes aflame—

what to do within such story to incur their weaknesses, more than simple resistance, more & more

old tribal stories wed to impossible machines—tis possible—tis?

tis—the pills & plants, machines & chants—here comes everything—

A thick sheaf of pages painful to look through—its fragmented hopes & hungers & confessions—yet I begin to think on it like a friend—its unwieldy beat-up old binder—its scent so near I cannot detect it—

this story is witness & so valued in such ways—it connects day to distant day & bears remembrance in a series of reports—

the big night leading toward now will mayhap join the scattered ragtag of lines—well so I hope as I sit on yet another of my life's countless buses—safe for a little while—

Rebecca kisses my cheek & urges me cast along—

When freaks come by, they will, notice them by how they are past trippin scriptures, notice what music & trees does to them, what news they pass with fire, what oceans they conjure with casual fingers

regard this night bigger freak than all, all it attracts to sing it, humans a few number against the whole—

X the Space Alien taps me: "If you ever stop you're caught" I nod

Beauty wilder than what's safe, moves agreeably along—Beauty the lover night pursues through shadows & stars

Rebecca leans against me for a moment, best telling in wordless like always—

Sometimes this story resembled fiction no longer maybe became the fiction I called it, moreso than twas, & everything became possible save one: going back.

Cecile grins suddenly & downs a pitcher of T's Secret Brew to toast me, I suppose—

What never has left is love for the melody & the hue, curve & rhythm, always in & of these, the excitement black pens contain coiled,

Gretta nods, thumps her bass deeper—

More confession, now than ever however cracked, nonlinear, the twist & fight within, the singing *will not fucking cease*—I feel it rough & roaring by day & dream, I feel it everywhere no matter the dull surfaces of faces & walls—it's there, & there, more & moreso—

I release to it in waking but also in slide down among dreams, I feel it crush its cry through my teeth

Freedom is hard. Waking up ever hurts when many slumber simply if betimes with stir—

Americus & Reality & Pascale play louder & louder til I still & stand back.

The train, the bus, whatever it is, takes me toward a bed or desk, whichever, & none of this is new, nothing, yet,

this night is new, it blooms singly

open out like ever, forgetting now the where or the when, the page laying blank open & I fall in the world thus sups me, then partakes of my knowing & shares its own

this night blows through the world powerful as any other

nothing but confession & praise left yet each bear lifetimes of enthuse, point newly to the sky grey blunt & ever exciting, to late winter's snow black & white regard its every wonder

feel the lift now, everything aloft save what doesn't matter & surely everything does matter

the night in contour & glare, fistly greater than electric torches feebly alighting patches—

“Should we stop him?”

“If he ever stops we're caught”

I push to be my strongest again,
find those magick places within
& how the come from elsewhere—

divide live prayer from poisonous

habit—

The push some days is harder,
all feels flat, nothing dandy shakes,
other days remembranced better brightly
but truer they struggled too—
the better ones spend more ink,
tis all—

looser of space & time than once,
memories forget themselves & arrive
without sentiment—bent to fool; or
beg to resume—

flat. flat. music eludes, power dim—

I think of Portland, days walking
along Martin Luther King Drive, poor
as fuck, jobless & heartcrushed
often yet I felt like life was
fat with chance.

Seattle before that, lost summer
but just as aflame at moments—
biking & bussing, writing poems
everywhere—

Even Boston retains a few bits of
glitter—

I'm nowhere now & pretending
otherwise makes it worse—all
I can do is keep coming
back & again to Art,

Live my prayer as work toward
ever higher days—

I sip my diet soda at Luna T's Cafe's bar, & explain:

I've been thinking that I've grown unclear what story, how? & so have begin to look for that story, realizing the one it used to be was Hartford & alcohol & poverty & books, & a long while it's been uprootedness & psychedelics & nature & music, story come from those basic elements, & they've changed, here I remain pen in hand working from very different baskets of clay—

awhile it was OK when Hartford became Boston, even when alcohol become psychedelics, but that led poverty to trees, nature that is, & books became music, things perhaps inevitable but still I wrote on—

then Boston became West Coast & some fuck fluke took me back to Hartford but we're not a we, not even close, & so I can't write as I did because the story isn't the same—

I sit on a bus I rode back when I was 17 but the story isn't the same—

I don't know what story, how, though lately I've been trying, all that's led me too is here,

lingual truth again is what I want, the page honest with words—what story, how?

Cecile's wearing his black sleeveless Motherfuckers t-shirt, head shaven of its hair remain, arms rock carved from a lifetime of banging skins hard & soft—

“Getting a crush on me?”

“Just looking. What story, how?”

“Yr in yr own way like always when you get all cunt cloggy”

“Thanks”

“Rhythm & melody, not much else, my pretty. A few words, even for you not many of them mean much.”

I nod. He's right there.

Rhythm & melody. Some words. Big night every night. Possible.

I continue:

The world I was born into, & later my stories, has transformed many times & slows none—right now, someone far side of globe can read about some of you on any cyberspaced computer—this won't do aught but continue—it's good—

regard my pen—its direct kind diminishing, a relative will take over, as much as I avoid it—

yet the truth is black ink on white sheets—big night every night, possible. One night I die & what next.

What story, how has changed because the human world has shifted along, my place in it too many times—

imagining Luna T's a small working class bar in a small degrading city long ago wasn't enough—

I work at a newspaper & it hardly matters but the paycheck, too long ago I began looking some other way—

have to stop awhile—



It's an obscure door out the back of Luna T's to elsewhere, elewhen, elsehow. Some see the door obviously, some barely, some not at all—

I didn't see it, didn't know that's what I walked through, what anyone walks through, to get to elsewhere, elewhen, elsehow.

Then the full moon reminded me, over Ohio, I was riding some bus & the moon remembered another time we regarded one another, & it hit me: doorway, or perhaps I knew it from a laundrymat some thousand miles east of this road chasing along the Mississippi—a door I suddenly noticed—& later the moon reminded me—& here I am knowing the door out the back of Luna T's Cafe—

& the big night nears, it surely does but I don't know what it will or can be like—I don't know—

Rebecca has gone through the door some while ago which is why I came before it, looking for her—there it is, I go through, here I am—

this is some kind of present truth to work with—

More a heart shared rawly than a calm story told, what pushes this book deeper, through the obscure back door, Rebecca is in there somewhere, we chase each other, take turns, now mine,

Each time I enter a pale blue vase on a small teak table too near the opening door's swing & I hardly catch the pending crash—

a rosy-lit room beheld, dark wood paneled, an armchair resembling others I've loved—a catch in the wall, never the same place, & me weakening & wishing just to sit—

or perhaps my musewife simply pushes me down into chair & takes her place in my lap truly hers—a window near shows a winterscape scrolling by, & she looks at me all blue-eyed darling & says tree chocolate kisses melody artist his muse artist his muse artist his muse—

Noisy Children music strums by restless & persistent, Gretta's bass leading with its thumping laugh, Cecile's drums flitting softly above & below, three acoustics & no keyboards hints that Stephanie has joined Rich & Ronnie on six-string orchestra then Rebecca flickers colors at me with fingertips glowing, peach, tan, pale blue, virgin pink, burning red

I agree to all of this & fall through hesitancy & woe to a place spangled with live making, fall through fur & beating wings, through leaves & branches pulsing with universe's potent bright stuff, become toward the high throb & none else I ever seek, music a rising floor beneath me as colors lift & I go, I go, I am gone, & keep going—

This human thing in me that thinks sloppy & feels selfishly, that calls one thing day & another night approving more the latter

that doubts like doubt is a good weapon & a righteous skill—

this human thing in me so prone to delicious shudder at a smiling face, a sky-spiralling tree,
& values this papery noise called language & its dancing kindred rhythm & melody

that watches & differentiates—a brown swamp at twilight holy, a raging king & his
pontificating lies loathsome

I try til a kiss lords me all & here is this armchair watching a train pass by through which
who I was scribbles furiously through fear &—

help me my every heartbeat says hold me kiss me teach me save me near me gird me chain
me prison me if that is how to be safe when free drives me too frenzied I—

her hand now leads me on knowing better what to do—

Oh, heart crushed by a some-a man I thought friend shrug smile goodbye—nothing I could
say or write to you—not my fist upon your throat—not my curse or cry—nothing—you
lorded me that day & my pen drooped—

see it rise wild again, motherfucker—how you hurt me—how like her you swam in my trust
& regard—how you smiled & poisoned me from within—

see me bleed, see it hurt,
see the embarrass, the shame,
see me vow to better beyond
your sorrow selfish harmful
pricking soul—

You took what little stable ground I had—you had masters to please—please them, please
them, please them—

Oh it hurts—yes sure it does—
& I forgive you no—none—nothing—

here look—see you hurt me—
see this page for you—this
music—ugly & angry—see
it float elsewhere—low
low bastard—

see me push on. see me pass you.

A mourning. A shift. Letting loose when not letting go. Oh sadness I can do nothing for
your deepest roots, there is no we between us in truth, I suckle them, they inspire me.

I once knew a woman wrapped around her wound's dark fists. I knew her & knew her until one day she was gone. Words do not rightly lament such ruptures. Words remind the living ache of a

world out there, a personhood awaiting to resume. Slowly I remembered & the sadness found itself no longer sickly & bloated but sharp, tuneful, an instrument ready for travel. Packed & potent.

I said I love you but did not mean sacrifice nor demise, it was no longer spilled about & embarrassing.

here it is this continuing night & I am yet along its path. Not well as in sick & recovered but neither ill with heartstruck paralysis.

No what toward naught but assembling my tools & readying for carriage. From yesterday's home toward where everything now pends & has waited, & waits tonight.

Scrape my face, gather my tools, thank all that yet I live

I promised the universe to serve my world if given a muse to love & sleep twined many nights. Must & shall toward this vow. Must & shall.

Rebecca reminds me with her hand & we move further in, deeper unto—

assembling tools, readying for carriage, crown of tools simple plastic & metal & ink pen, & a sheaf of pages in a half-broken binder, & a few similar others—

the thousand thousand thousand words filling thousands of pages & runs along thousands of days & hardly any why involved now if ever—

gathering for the great burst westward, the hope for flight unto release not ruin this time—

carrying Luna T's Cafe along, sure, like always, this state to that, this decade then more of course

see this pen go see its raggy man keep trying yes see however which way possible—

the pain is fuel, the very weariness & its drag is fuel, all of it fucking fuel, this scribbling soul intends to burn everything in its eternal starflight & released keep going, a vow, a hope, a fancy—

the night every one of them does cover & carry me along praise em & love em & dance & laugh & kiss as many of away as possible—

see the scribbling raggy bit of man energy going to spend it all & ever & all

I know no other way!

here goes again!

t h i s i s o n l y h o w !

Big night ever coming & always about, kiss it lovely, its several sweet strums, a low voice
jigging between croon & laughter—

oh my let it out blow it way
out

Warm breath the years twas only mine own & a wish yet reckon current hours & the she-
soul always about—

Luna T's bar roars wide with delight as hometown ballteams stomp & score & score again!

Joy fires through me, green with seed & sunlight & soil I bug & animal & dual thumb dance
my way about, ancient magick, what kings & priests try to conjure & romance with fist &
tome, holy ancient pagan green magick regards them not save as foul buzz, wee
requirements—

I dance six legs & arms borrowing some & going more—call every flap & flourish some
good thing's prayers

one for a girl giggled & gone
one for a brother striving mongst demons
one for a world pocked with cruel

beg me, keep me, bite me, eat me, dreams near sunlight I am drifting through ragged rooms
of apocalypse, I am flying toward whatever soft & caressing,

oh big & little here goes up & higher shoot! score! shoot score! shoot! score!

I open out wider the joy & dirt toward every's where—

I remember. My kind remembers.
I believe. My kind believes.
I love. We love.

We grieve & we dance, hardly a
change in vibration between them.

Rebecca watches me flare greater & her hands wild across her page—her blue eyes rise
cathedral's dreaming high & more—

Big night bring the drinks & the best party jokes. Stop now.

Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker in silence observes TV images of carnage & brutality, burned bodies, wrecked mothers, artillery wielding grimacing boys & he rises up hotter than holy & he cries: *“Behold yon vision of the small final king of men as he & his cabal of wizened chieftains arch steely against any plaint for mercy or humility!”*

“Behold the small final king of men proclaim some other age’s truth that of our own! Behold his clutch upon incoherent tomes, sickly pages rife with tribal fables & ancient fears!”

“Behold this small final king of men as his bloodless eyes shift among slaughter’s fragments for a holy instruction or clue! Behold nothing good in this world respond to his fervent scrabble!”

“Fellow sinners in this reconstructed bunker of everpersisting iniquity! Ye all be helpless before the fist & fury of yon small final king of men! Helpless, one & all, but to observe the steady collapse of empires as the deepest mark in a shoreline fills inevitably with tide.

“Neither confess nor beseech any god in your writhing woe! This race no longer bears a loving father even as a child’s remaining dream. We walk many & alone, we fail & fall familiarly & alone.”

Mr. Bob the barman leaps for Dr. Knickerbocker’s cane before it can strike true the TV mounted on the wall. The Sox are on soon however right the doc is otherwise.

rosy-lit room, dark wood paneled, an armchair on both coasts, still & gone—catch in the wall, never the same place, & I sit toward beginning of a big night—

collapse within, remembering thrashing busrides, accidental pretty moments, lives for hours or weeks—

if I sleep dreams will come again & dash me hard with persistence, with hard heat & manic tune, & dreams strengthen & follow me into daylight—hook into my soft, prick me of power for obscure ends, raise me higher from something not quite necessity nor love—

Nothing happens like any prediction, neither less & more,

was it more love or touch or clarity yearned all those years?

branches glow in streetlight how little explains anything—

The secret agent sat next to the space alien, the old preacher, the dead poet, & others & he admitted he was a secret agent tho nobody had queried. “I know, I know. Now it’s not secret. But then again I was sort of fired. Sort of. I was told to stop what I was doing & do no more. They still pay me though I don’t really exist officially. It’s complex.”

There is polite listening. The agent continues.

“I could tell you things to give you nightmares. How two things can be equally true & totally contradictory. It’s what you whacko conspiracy theorists miss. I feel bad for them. They don’t understand the basics of time & space manipulation.”

The alien nods.

“Let two realities dovetail at key moments & whammo! Two correct explanations for one event. Let several cross or lay several atop each other & it gets even better.

The dead poet sits his ice water. “We knew this a long time ago, for a little while.”

“Yes! We let you in a side door & showed you! Then we let you out a dead end to assure nothing you claimed could be verified. It was sorrowfully easy.”

The old preacher sips his drink. **“You are a fool to claim such knowledge & wisdom. You are owned & cowed & deceived by your partial knowledge & full arrogance,”** he says quietly.

“Yes! I told them that! I said we no longer controlled events if we ever had. I tried.” Sad.

Everyone silent awhile. “I came here on a hint from something. It was like a dream or a delusion. The narcotics in my brain conspired this coming here. So to speak.”

“You can stay,” says Rebecca, smiling. “You’re safer here than most anywhere else.”

“Yes. Awhile.” Nods. Yes.

Secret agent looks me over. “You’re the kind they want. But you also scare them.” I nod, uninterested. “If you can just learn to wield it all, not just some scrap of coherent life, & not just a fat fuck nutty pen while your days burn down. All of it. A danger. An attraction too.”

“All I want is an end to the occupation. Men guarding men all over the world. Patches of my heart still not my own. If you say they connect, I already know this. But how? What to do toward it?”

“Burn it all. Every last page.”

“What good would that do?”

He sighs. “I don’t know. It’s what they wanted you to do. You nearly did at moments.” I nod. “But you didn’t & there is a plan for that too.” I look at him. “Leave.” His face flattens open. “What you were before you came here & what you are now bear a chasm between them. Nobody is after me. I do no good to their ideas.” He nods. Pulls out his weapon & lays it on the bar. None of us go for it. It remains.

Finally Rebecca nods & Mr. Bob gathers it with a hankchief. A fresh drink for the spy. Finally, retirement. Feels good.

We call him Agent Garrish. He nods, deserves this, knows it. Feels welcomed. The weapon is unseen again.

“No more warnings?”

“No. Information, theories, speculation.”

“No help? I have contacts.”

“It’s not *that* kind of story.”

“Burdened with plot?”

“Yes. That kind.”

“What is my role here?”

“To discover your role here”

“You used to have plots. I read your file.”

“No, you didn’t.”

“You’re right. I was guessing.”

“Help bartend. We need Mr. Bob for other things.”

“Do I get to see?”

“I don’t know.”

“Does Luna T’s even serve alcohol anymore?”

He is tall & very thin. His black trench coat & fedora stick around. A newcomer yet already some ease about him. It helps that he’s funny. Tells improbable stories. People allow this. It’s an improbable world, at best guess.

Watches *X-Files* on reruns with reluctance. Loves *Married with Children* says Al Bundy is nearer a realistic spook than Fox Muldur. Nods. One blue eye, one green. Some call him Agent Bowie.

Then he twitches harder & admits he wrote a book too. His twitch riles across his face burst from within by a need to understand, to please & connect. A weak man in some ways.

“Mine isn’t all loopy and religious like yours” I snort. “It’s adventure. Drug dealers. Slave traders. Fat politicians & juicy whoors.” “Extraterrestrial prison camps?” I suggest. Twitch,

twitch: “Maybe.” “Transdimensional synthesis?” Twitch, twitch! “Some.” “Stellar warp technology & space-time inversion?” Twitch!

Rebecca makes me stop before Garrish Bowie explodes or worse. I remind him of his bartending duties, something I learn quickly to hold over his head. He bartends with middling skill & intermittent passion.

“Rebecca, why someone new?”

“Why not? He’s funny”

“There’s enough already”

“I don’t know but there he is to be figured out.”

“True”

Another speed westward, pen & place & muse all mixing up higher again, I’ve left Connecticut behind, my few loved ones there aging & broken one way or another. Barely made it out.

Bring a fresh crop of hopes with me,
grown from a soil enriched with humility.
What next, dunno.

3000 miles & 6 days will bring me my preferred playing field. A chance to make it, again.

“You’re wanting your freak mojo back.”

“My music, yes. It’s not gone. It just . . . wavers in & out.”

“And you know to get anywhere it has to run high hard & constant”

“So what then?”

“There was a time I was a mushroom while. Magick kind. I’m sure you know.”

“This isn’t helping, Bowie”

“I learned a lot. Soil & sunshine & moisture is a feast. I don’t know if there’s much else any living thing really needs.”

“And?”

“There’s nothing but the truth. The rest is trails away & vapors. If you want your mojo or music back, they’re the same thing, you have to tell the truth again”

“I try”

“Try harder.”

“You were a mushroom.”

“It was an experiment. Unofficial project. Controversial. They called me Freddy Ready.”

“Your code name?”

“The mushrooms. It was a compliment & critique. They’re like that.”

If this story hasn’t been virtually polluted with truth-telling or truth-attempting then I don’t know what fills its sheets.

What I don’t know is what exactly drives me right now. What the nature of the thing that replaced all that was crushed. Awhile it was psychedelic dream, later it was desire’s supernova. Now . . . I don’t know. Music a hint, nature a hint. No hint in people. None.

I'm 40 years old in a few days with four bags of belongings on a cross-country bus. My computer is raced west along the land too.

No slow. Little safe. Deep's hunger.

Noisy Children music whips me hard along as ever. Driven, *alive*.

"Yam what I yam"

Bowie nods. Wipes glasses already clean. Mr. Bob teaching him well. "Popeye. Based on a secret super agent. Cartoons coded with messages. Spinach. When his pipe blows & how long & what angle." Cackles.

I dig deeper into your songs, the nocturnes hoarier every day by which I cried our rise & crash. It hurts, some, you hurt me, killed a kind of thing in me, but I kept getting up every day, sloppy & tubby & clownly ignorant of any moment but this one, this one, this one—

Then I saw new human turrets aflame, embodied operas of stupid pain, ideals wielded & wasted by boss-men with fat hubris to protect from whatever world open hands might creep through—

See, my pen kept moving & a pretty noise here & there, & then blue eyes looking at me as you did, & others before you, & the green everywhere kept writing hope & instructions all over my sorry ass & what path I stumbled when not several—

All remaining of you were some delicious dream moments & a long drag twined of guilt, failure, sadness—and really nothing to do but write it through—say: I loved you—say: a swathe of you runs through me yet—say: you join many other swathes—you take your place alongside Jenny, Christine, Mark, Kelly, Barry, Guy, Douglas, Leni, Erika, Gerry, & more, you're more a name on a list now, another grey empty burntout building in my long twilight prairie, I am putting you away in some vital manner, I sang you many songs, fed you from my dreams & very ether, close to nameless or even lost for you—but that day passed, & a few more, & what last of you I knew was laughing claws in my veins, & even that now some other day's foul news—

the other night in a rainstorm I ranted & praised for a new beloved's attention. I held her wholly when the night within shifted hot & cold. I called her blue eyes to me again & again when our temporary parting wild grieved. I told her I loved her because she stayed. Other words more romancey but these belonged to her alone.

Somewhere within you'll always laugh through me. This is how hardest you remain. The rest old ink stains on pages I yowled & then elsewhere.

& this story's longest plaint: be again about more than Soulard's woe. Not knowing how, but again.

The whole bar at Luna T's watches my arriving minutes into Seattle, the swoop of bus along I-90, a million trees beneath a clouded sky, the fistly wind pushing everything about, & I put on my many shirts & jackets that didn't fit in my bags—

They regard my tired face & murmur words to rouse me—neither hour nor mile separates us & they come along this old path now new again gladly.

Few who know me well, if any at all in fact, regard this city as my last arrival. Yet it marks the full blossom of my latest re-birth & shall immerse me a long while—

Bowie the spy alone speaks up: “That Space Needle was a Martian artifact prettied up for the World’s Fair! Haha! I kid you not!”

Some days pass, some things move, some wait, I squirm with the begging for a place among others, but deeper is the thrust & shaping my renewed life out West demands & deserves—

I wandered hours, riding my willing old bicycle monster & timeflopping to other days & their passing truths—

nothing what it seems, so my brother Jim Reality says & OK & yes & sure & certainly & huh?

30 years I’ve put pen & pencil & paper & pause here to say: yes, & say huh?

Sitting yet another joint & scribbling w/longhair music on my earphones & what is all this how do I do it when else & more & but & all not as it seems?

I’m working on it, elliptically, & so not making my way greatly enough—

Rebecca leans against me & her smile is all yes, no huh—& I think: she’s right!

Bellevue Transit Center 9-11-2002 I last sat here & the woman I loved then was still perhaps within reach—a job interview then as now a total bust—

yet reckon the difference in 1½ years—reckon how being here again was something I could not have foreseen—here I am—the woman I wanted then is another’s wife & another’s mother—perhaps I never had a chance—

I speak marry & love to another as well—the corporate waste about me hasn’t moved—

All alone. All Suffering. Yes. No. Sometimes. Creatures & all we know clung to the earth, hurt, hurt, yes, true, sometimes else, days perhaps moments near elsewhere

the wide plunge deep unto another night, another city, another muse somewhere, the music without memory or fear, I feel the jitter again, feel it careening

the day sorted through its losses, one still hurts but not as much, I wish her happiness & novelty & would rather not know how she fades in me day by day

You’ve come & gone, by your many choices—there’s nobody left to blame or forgive just remembrance pursuing unrevealed mysteries in times past & to come—affecting, wild card—blood haunted yet flowing—

Surrender some things, forgive others, let some hate poison everything, then let that fragment away too, forgive, then move along, to teach, to heal, to dream, whatever, the words rise through as ever, their will told by shifting vibrations, by lean & dizzy, rise & press, how many colors, how few

Someone looks about Luna T's bar & cracks some query about pending Seattle Mariners' banners—Space Needle souvenirs—Rainier beer cheap on tap—

Surrender some things, forgive others, how many people I've been while filling these pages, how many more awaiting, press it on by one slant then another, several, none, I talk mostly to old pages & persisting mysteries nowadays, if a creature perhaps by now a cat's fifth life going on til sometime rather than when—

Rebecca kisses my cheek, good wife, good muse, good schoolgirl high & low, resembling many & ever further herself & I suppose it's possible in her paintings I may still resemble clarity—

yes I want to hope, to stride through moments more stroke than blur, make words bounce & jingle newly & like always, no how-to, none, sit some joint among caffeine & human passages—

Surrender some things, forgive others, keep fucking writing with some crazy electric noise tapping fists & wet smudges within, keep, yes, neither surrender the music nor forgive any threat the line, right round my inner globe, nothing, nobody, not the pink cheeked fairest nor the broad beasted bullet, hardly even concede ever stopping ever, this power very itself is my home, is my who, bears owns carries cuddles kisses defines my who—

ever the flesh begs flesh, promises how good this time, how like the moon's breadth, dream's flights, filling no other means might—

how fool.

a tongue down any raised virgin's heated back, slower than ticks, slower still, not enough, not answer, not the power, more power's great dandy toy

"Young heretic! Thou shalt not deny the soul's carriage & its earthly manifest! None shall realize truth's merest thought with such blunt & blind impedimenta!" cries Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker, briefly.

Body fouls & furies—

Surrender some things, forgive others, pursue the highs which never find high enough & settle, a feast of music sings this world, beyond the bumping thugging extended twisting crumbles of this & that coughed-out empire—sings those bumpings & thuggings as deliberately as any green chorused canticle or pink climaxing caterwaul—

Nothing within life slaves as much as life itself. You are spit wildly fully fiery into it & shat blankly dumbly numbly from it.

A few steins hoist high at the bar.
On TV, the Red Sox are winning again.

Bodies fire & freely, lift up & out & through, I spent all day scratching at rocks til I thought something had to be proven—& nothing came—will ever come—

now I sit slower thinking of flowing sugar, wiggling leaves, what many musics near always—

Surrender some things, forgive others, snake among the hard questions themselves, the erratic touches of blown white light, how they allure . . . owned to the moment, pink soft slave bitch to the universe's tending taking hands, taken by a hunger still rising when the feast subsides—

High beyond meaning, the band shifts melody rhythm harmony lyric among each other, perhaps into a dream where several are raged wild & crushed—

play more & more into that dream, sometimes resembling the Big Night, sometimes discovering it is 1968 or 1988 or 2288 & what would each year have sounded like if they'd sung it?

High beyond belief, a tap & several, the moon gives way to its stranger's thorned grasp, now shocks of jagged glow all about the sky

another psychedelic dream, the big shaman chases his small wandering potion-struck tikes, others await him with whimpers of broken dependency—

melody harmony rhythm earticks

your instructions become an erotic lure somewhere deep within, there are ancient strums raised between us, where order breaks off for a beat & the red wild chatharrrrrsis pow! Pow! POW! High beyond meaning?

Yes. Now just fucking pose. Still, & ever. None of you holy house me now but pose & pose & fucking pose & there will be hours I return by.

Scratching at rocks today, some lost mongrel of hours, love me, lick me, let me rejoin, call me back from this throbbing murk, where nothing centrally matters n'more

Neon blinks along a worn stretch wind bops the green to rawer dance brick taverns lean back from that last human word

Just fucking pose. All this freckled glory high beyond meaning, soon, soft, near,

never. Keep one small finger around. Maybe, never.

who you gonna trust boy the vague faces around you or the long arcing roar within *still*
fucking ascending what shall you ride what shall you be what's left of you still greatly possible
 the universe your allie your fan but not easy eh stop fucking whining & get to work harder

Make Art Tell the Truth
Tell the Truth Make Art
Make Truth Make Art
Make Truth is Art
Truth is Art
Art is Truth

bump up higher ugly or otherwise
 a step a crawl a cry a whimper

The band pushes it a little
 more nobody is going to leave
 tonight the windows pulse
 black & drip long teeth, the
 floor is liquid & warm &
 bears naked feet in propulsion
 not still dance or drown
 oh yes this is psychedelia's
 hard truth you will do greater
 or you will simply disappear
 to yourself in some juking
 high way shown IT' you carry
 on it or you do not there is
 no sentiment in the psychedelic
 eggcrack of worlds upon worlds
 revealed—

I take a moment in the sepia-paged hour upon me. Scared, selfish, old, beset, angry, jealous

green regardez I yes thank ye
 green waggle about me & thank ye

cracked phalanx of electric nocturnal buds hung standing mounted blah sky concrete above
 except when you know it's trick blah I am failing the world give no fuck lies no fuck lies blah

see it all shine too big
 see me seduced by something
 & fragments, a little pipe organ
 & a flap of pink scarf in the
 midnight blow—

Longing for the staying music, the lasting shimmer, crush the nightmare, the sickness, heart
 nay broken never was but beaten

two drummers now three feel the rhythm
lengthen & noise deeper & more bodies
now more tightly raise the careen now
raise it again some worlds only live
here inside the rhythm like some only
branch out from the nightest fires—

there is no world I write a few times & it means more or less or other & else

Days scared & then an hour into a secret cavern where several live fugitive the wind spasms
cheap windows & I look around & do not see this resembling home—

Bowie laughs & nudges Cosmic Early who does not comment. Near Luna T's now a great
structure rises its neck beholds a round compact spaceship—Bowie laughs again while
Cosmic Early makes a note—

Rebecca notices sepia reflection off a dark wood counter, the reflection of a ceiling fan
refracting in a darkened window, how the traffic light turns greener each time as the acid
comes on slow 'n' good—

Whatever book after this, if any book at all, this one truest, its pages brutal with innumerable
confessions—

Kassandra, all good & hope in me with you especially tonight as I feel how close & soon
maybe my muse & wife at last to stay so long upon so long but maybe—hope's prelude

the wounded minstrel led along paths secret & known through the small isle's green throb—
if this a dream, it mattered enough to grasp for at dawn—on the beach countless stones
tangled in puckered clutches—from a height tidal mysteries threw out patterns & chaos both
as possible deductions—within the wood charred ancients recalled lost days of
conflagration—a great bird swept & dumbled the air over a road empty even of rural truck &
tractor—a salamander froze & was corpse to the curious touch—

“drink water, breathe deeper, remember the tide,” something counseled—

there are nods at this story—some wisdoms found only on the careening path between
conscious groping & rarer flashes

A long wheeled rush down hill it tasted brilliant, head lowered in to the shoot & lovely &
hard & silent—

only music was magick'd summoned

I look at Knickerbocker. “Men. Foul, lunatic men.”

He reads from his tome:

**“He with body waged a fight,
But body won; it walks upright.**

**Then he struggled with the heart;
Innocence and peace depart.**

**Then he struggled with the mind;
His proud heart he left behind.**

**Now his wars with God begin;
At stroke of midnight God will win.”**

We nod & agree though it sums all nothing. But:

“Stood on the ledge
tied to a noose
you came along &
you cut me loose
you came along &
you cut me loose” blows out of the speakers & matters as much & no deny

long night for sleeping without ease.

we become root & roam, alike & elseways. Nights especially mark this true. Hours among
caresses, what love breathes, what foul it breaches, what remains along, its other, its grim—

Shadows by your lashes, hands pressing one page back & another, your great young sheen,
how I cannot contrive this all alone, how music passes through flesh as desire—

“Someone shut him up, he’s writing too loudly again” a drunkard at the bar sneers
bemused—

Love taps, taps, etches, smotes, disappears with a long excruciating tail of pain behind, lifts,
careens, kiss me, go, now, the new berries of sweet nearness, I bow, beg, kneel, remember
unwilling, brave by pocked faith back into this shared world I’ve known it full yet twist
grossly often to its crushing hungers I willing embrace

If upon the stage Noisy Children amps higher, distort unto distort images of burst chains,
slow tapping boots, rising ships with just one bearer—

fanblades flap slowly as the LSD mists the whole run of Luna T’s Cafe for the Big Night
arriving here as once the Empire bombed the jungles & rice paddies of a small faraway
enemy with—

“Shut him up! Barkeep!”
“Wait a minute. You’ll forget why you’re asking.”

I remember leaning into your grasp as you rested against a tree & you fed me sips of water & small berry endearments—now your pages turn & I can't remember

“why I was asking”

can't remember “who I was talking about” can't remember “where I came from soupset”
can't remember “my fears that cripple my happiness”

can't remember & the band shifts back to acoustic the show never ends the music never ends follow it, follow, it passes through & leads you to where you will be freer—

Toward truer if not true notes,
toward a more fertile something,
a wide-eyed careening time,
clean bass notes raising nutty highs
I don't know, comb her hair every
morning & renew the work's ideal—

Always evolving toward a medicine called love, bear, bring, share, make, mix, spread—

candles splash shadows on stone walls, incense works music & desire into the slightest of cracks, hands cup energy awaiting new bid—

Rebecca lays along our bed nude & sketching, smearing, twisting one image toward another & back & more & back—

I bear her as my golden light, sleep her in my arms bloodheavy prayer to the night—

What if I could do something other with this story, begin to tear it open & clean up its tangled guts, get it well & walking rightly again isn't possible? A question now pending—

I wrote: “There can be no lasting bliss in this mortal life til nearly everything ever known, ever felt, ever lived, ever chased, ever bitten, ever touched, ever ever, is gone, til one's cell is the air, one's scripture's the bee's, til one brushes with sun's light moon's light candle's light, til one's body reserves just a little golden moisture, til memory is nonsense, dreams bunk, play obvious, polity fool, all truth & future apparent in a lick, a fallen leaf, a shaping breeze—”but this time do not stop—I look bluntly & say you are about to get stripped of everything including nearly your pen, you will see your heart razored with mocking, cut up by lies you treasure when most else is gone, you are going to do things a least a swath of respect would prevent you from—you will become a stranger to who you are right now, you will regret everything ever—

don't make that call—don't chase that girl—turn off your phone—I am telling you now—

“You can't stop me—Aren't you glad I become you? You got the girl—she sits with you, loves you crazy & sane”

“You’re going to get awled deep! Mocked, hated, laughed at! For what? For some bitch who tells you she does what she has to to survive—long after crushing you & disappearing will show up & consider your remaining fidelity as though owed any!”

“But you get the last word. You don’t reply. You choose to let it go at a cost unknowable—because to continue would be worse”

“But stop it! Save me!”

“No. There’s no saving & no failing—you honored that love to the end—til it was gone—”

“It’s gone—I sometimes feel everything good is gone”

“It’s not—you just have to piss & paw yr way to the green & the good—”

“She destroyed me—”

“No. You don’t need psychedelics to know that.”

“How do I find it again, that magick drive, it just lived in me like a lovely obsessed beast?”

“Turn back to the open door & Art will be there, through the doorway as always. Music, follow it, it will always bring you home.”

“Old sentiments. *Fuck ‘em!*”

“Agreed, but use what you’ve got. That’s all really. Love the one you’re with. Sometimes you get what you need. Blah Blah.”

Rebecca pulls me into her embrace in our double-bed sunk luscious in moonlight. She holds me & hums. Using my black pen she sketches secrets on my back, erotic promises & picture-spells, adoration in black ink—

The book is called *Why?*, my book, appears in my dreams lately & is strange—sometimes I read it, sometimes write it. Sometimes we read or write each other or vice versa—

All is grief, I dream asleep & awake, so one grieves, & sometimes music commiserates & everyone dances awhile—

Why? dreams *Things Change?* dreamed by *6 x 36 Nocturnes* dreaming me composing them one & all we shift among each other in the raw moonlight Rebecca kisses me love through evanesce nothing ever lost—

I braid her hair while the fecund summer moon slides down her back a trickster for how it reveals, what it calls its sums—

I am praise again for everything pulsing with the blood-making I buck & fidget to raise the night's gain, I am a shiver, a convulse, pen moved by bunches of mad, nutty neurons—
abbbbbbb

More words but they come out of me by wild breath & skittering heart & numberless prayers—

Rebecca tries to bring me into sleep but nothing will cease this for long, she just wants me to both live & make art

Without the second, fuck the first—fuck fuck fuck it—she knows this too—

What feast of music has run from my soul, why do I feel like blank pages blowing off in the grey twilight, I tell me “to reinvent the world you must begin everywhere & nowhere” & this tonight means nothing, I say “imagine no world at all,” add “total absence of this life's grease & goo, no moan for the newly born nor tremble for who & what passes on, no breath that anything, anywhere exists at all” but fuck it they're only words on a page, a lifetime of pages & I don't know what for—

the howl deep within: is it still there? Is anything still there?

I ask these things & I don't know what an answer would resemble if it exists at all—

Not a prayer that sadness suddenly disappear but a chance to work it loose of my heart—that's all—

A long coffeehouse with white curtains open to a nocturnal hilly street—a sad woman's voice on the radio—I write for whatever sanity can come from it anymore—

memory of a tall tree with a soft red trunk, lacey green needles, how breaking its beauty!

What's left, how to spend it, does it renew?

I look back & forward, within & through, I reach around for what's powerfully trailing me, burden & beauteous, dreams arch up with cantankerous opinions of my loved ones in their endless decline

shake it twice & join a dozen full moons scattered through as many years, shake it twice & watch her dance tight & free & full, watch the sparkles tremble through the luminous desert city, watch another & another,

someone speaks up with a fist of rules & pronouncements so what to do—bark at his fucking grinding verbal tome of bones—

watch the strange couple link & scratch, a word here, several there, wage beauty & like this phrase & then some other year let it go for old & frivolous or keep its reminding twinge deep among the squeezing insistent things far below—

ahh shake it twice & twice more, many the band then & to come knows how to roar in & around the quick tender taps & the throat choking squalls—

The bitching gnaw, holiness of need, sleep a thousand nights alone to pay for what few damp & laughing among curved & colored smoke, garments breathing happily atwist on the carpet

What is holy if not all, I asked in an old poem from a lost night kin to tonight

In leaf & man, storm & art, some frenzy, some jitter, bullets fall from kings call it law, edict, how to live & why or else, something still rattles my blood, rocks my bones, a flourish of curves, riddles, & upset, & I have nothing other than this for the years past & coming, shake it twice, & again, & ask, & listen, moan, moan, going going going but not just yet—

Rebecca drapes along me bonelessly how dunno & she listens as I write out cries & mews, she becomes at moments the small vital link to—I don't know—to the world's desire for & from me—

long descending roads, green swathes every kind of human grunt & grope, the night shuts itself to me & gestures away—

But I refuse the refusal, bark at the door until I let me in, believe nothing, believe everything, evolve to a melody, a good enough called God, & then better, an arcing cry that opens wide in flames

I refuse the refusal & play on even when nobody listens, long past some critical—

I fragment & won't stop—pick up what's about, trudge along again—

sleep in loving arms won't let me down to despair ever—

Feeling crazy tonight awhile the fears not gripping but following, a ratstink from worst days. There is only love. Something laughs hard. Prove it otherwise. More laughter.

I won't let you, I call together my fractured bits & stand them hard together—we'll make a new juice, some new mind nutty drink for the Big Night o listen let life heal you now & again—

Surrender some things, forgive others, keep trudging, & more, several directions at once & call it dancing again, love anyone in sight, it's faith anything good exists anyway, faith & a night before laughing til the hours lead most into covering dreams—

Belong to the world, let it, choose it, silhouettes high enough for any conspiring soul with a few trinkets to share, willingness to following the lines awhile then elsewhere—

strum strum—nice, nicer,—now let em out—

Rebecca up all night painting one of our bedroom walls black & upon this black a perpetual bonfire beneath a fullmoon—all the light that of reverie & reborn, dream-stuff we find each other I—

Dream of endless vines, true nature of the world, no time & space, shaking with it, the cover on things for us to do more than feed & duplicate—

want to be enough to say how much more there is now—

I read a poem by a man remembering the boy he was & I sit in this green coastal city remembering the man he, I, was—

he remembers a boy who loved a girl by way of him loving a new girl, & so too I remember him—

All alone, all suffering, yes. All is grief, so one grieves, yes, that's how something is—
but then days aside a pretty face new to me, new to the world still—
music throbs through my skin still, sway, shake, shudder—
grimy paintings on a coffeehouse wall—
glitter, dust, inexplicable moments, & push & another door gives way & is behind,
now gone—

Holy something in every moment,
& I know best through pen's scratchings,
I raise up awhile & good gushes
in—

Smile. Wake up! Happiness

Those words struck through me that blurring day in a town thousands of miles & hours from here. I have never bettered them or dismissed them—that autumn Cambridge day, tripping hard on dream-film's music & jumpy-hard colors & writing those words on walls all over Boston

& descending escalator into a train station toward a rough figure with his hand out into his face & we clashed brightly & the moment held—

I wanted to sing, paint, dance those words

Smile. Wake up! Happiness

I carry them with me still like a braided gold token with a secret shine I can leave an endless bit here & around—

Noisy Children wants to play & wants me present with words ☺ ! []

A dream comes along & perhaps a gift & a better knowing, I find place again at Luna T's Cafe, in the bandroom, small table beneath the front window, Rebecca in the other seat, & Noisy Children up on stage willing the perpetual flowing noise of aether into sound, squeeze

for melody, stamp for rhythm, craft crazy into words, weave, knit, build a soup from
collection intuition, call it music, or laughter

room goes blue in smoke conjured
by E Major 7th chord, smile! surprise!
a yes both I & we oh glad

windows shake green til like formed
portals in jungles never found &
the evening cries in A minor wake up!
really! come along! ready & here goes

bodies all shades glow pink with
energy & blood & want a cry from
many voices strikes C Major 6th Happiness & a quiet

a pause, a still, til Cecile Grey hoary punk drummer roars out with his sticks & cymbals &
jolly good sneer that the dance will now resume—

abbb good this dream delicioso—

The revolution is now, not tomorrow, transformation perpetual, smile, & continue to work,
this moment a god, breaking wide in flames, the band descends into an underworld of
rhythmic mulling, playing to the ash covering the world, bleaking out harmonies of midnight
& deeper—

We make the world with another's clay. Wake up! Everything possible is going on now,
suggesting not a universe of right & wrong but one of infinite occurrence, no center of
singular truth, no fount to near or gesture, bowing, toward, no matter the beckoning,
promising tomes, the king's stony thrust, the market's secret vampiric suck on one's content,
the whore's wiggle & wet laugh—

Happiness, regard it everywhere, regard something at least kind to it, & share her dreaming
bed with your beloved maiden, my singer & my song, the sound of her cheek kissed & need
not ask what is holy if not all? I wish to sing her singing us our song still bearing ragged old
me, charred figure chanting to the long moon's glow, but new, nameless, moments of
content, *abbb, yes, let the world heal a soul sometimes—*

I breathe me out slowly yet here I am, a forceful remain, strews & seeds enough to build up good again

The dream of Miss Chris & Algernon Beagle, long & far off friends, is like gift to me &
something of a path too—

In the forest, green & good, they are with me again like a gargantuan of years ago—but no—
no years, no miles—no loss—no loss again & again—loss til one forgets any other way—

the only Soma to drink of is the green & shine of the moment, its music—immortal contains all of us everywhere & now—the light is here in every last glowing & dank cell—gods found in the very jumpy molecules of our skin, so on, *blab blab*—

just keep breaking into fuss for more than boredom & rust, raise it up, things change, things change, I know right now for the moment they surely do—



To be continued in Cenacle | 63 | December 2007



WITHIN'S WITHIN: SCENES FROM THE PSYCHEDELIC REVOLUTION

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The Witness

My father lies on top of the bedspread, the pillows propped up crooked behind him, the seashell ashtray on his chest, smoking, leafing through the Bible, staring smiling out the window. “The Holy Ghost has departed me,” he sometimes says. I am running light as air across the roofs on Main Street. Threading my way through the flapping laundry, around the television antennae. One of the neighbor women calls out to me. Be careful, you’re going to trip yourself and fall, you’re going to hurt yourself, but already I’m a mile away, five miles away, running so lightly I only need to come to earth to bounce up again, springy, my toes like a monkey’s toes, my hair flying.

You don’t know what you’re saying, my mother tells me. Her eyes are puffy from crying. Her lips look chapped—all the lipstick has been wiped off. You’re dreaming with your eyes open: you’re a liar.

I was running away from home but not for the first time. I had taken \$3.87 from the secret place in my mother’s stockings-and-underwear drawer in the bureau. Beneath the sheet of old Christmas wrapping paper. I was running, flying, galloping. No one could catch me. No one saw me. Mrs. Howard hanging her laundry, old sour-breathed Mr. Ledbetter on the first floor landing, Whoa, horsey! Where are you going so fast? Do you live in this building?

Why do they always talk in loud joking voices. And make swipes at my hair because of the curls. But I have learned to duck and keep on running. . . .

You tell such lies, my sister Irene says. But of course she’s jealous.

It is many years ago, too many to calculate. Below Waterman Park where you’re not supposed to go alone the man with the coat slung over his shoulder is speaking softly and angrily to the woman in the peasant blouse, but I can’t hear, I have pressed the palms of my hands against my ears. I am not to blame, I am only eleven years old.

It is the last summer we will be living above Harders Shoes on Main Street, Main Street at the corner of Mohigan, a few weeks before the fire, before everything is changed. “What is going to happen?” my mother’s sister from Trenton asked. “He isn’t dangerous, is he?—I mean, you or the girls—” My mother didn’t answer at first. Maybe she knew I was listening behind the door. Then she made a sound I couldn’t decipher, a laugh, a thin tired snorting kind of laugh. She said: “Not the girls, he’s crazy about the girls.”

I am running away from them, from the apartment on Main Street. Irene and me sharing a bed, Momma on the sofa in the living room, my father in the “large” bedroom. Was he dangerous? No. Yes maybe. Of course not. Sometimes love for us brimmed in his eyes. Sometimes he had to wipe at his eyes, ashamed, with the back of his hand.

I am running away to Waterman Park. My father shuffles the cards for a game of gin rummy, then changes his mind, lets the cards fall onto the floor, a cascade like water falling, with almost no sound. He isn’t drunk but he isn’t friendly right now. His feet are bare and bluish-white and the nail of the big toe on the injured foot is that queer plum color, and grown very thick: maybe a quarter-inch thick.

He reaches for the Bible, he reaches for a fresh pack of cigarettes.

He says: “Get out of here. Shut the door. I’ve had enough of you spying on me—all of you.” His voice is low and murmuring, he doesn’t sound angry. He never does.

It is an afternoon in late August. Warm muggy motionless air. I am running up the dim-lit stairs to the room, the three bills and the coins are in my pocket, no one will know where I’ve gone. My mother is at work, my sister is at a friend’s house, my father is lying on top of the bedspread, smiling, not smiling, staring out the window. The bedspread is scorched in several places from his cigarettes.

I slam outside, letting the door strike against the asphalt siding, not taking time to close it. The tarry roof is quivering with heat. It is our last summer. The four-room apartment above the shoe store. The sandstone building. Main Street at Mohigan. Momma worked days at the hospital out East End Avenue, Irene was fourteen and in tenth grade at the high school. My father went out sometimes in the evening. Then he wouldn’t come home until two or three in the morning, or much later, eight o’clock, but we wouldn’t see him, he’d go into the bathroom and lock the door. But most of the time he didn’t go out. They were quarreling once and I overheard my mother say, Why don’t you leave, then, go back to Isle Royale and live alone the rest of your life—go to Alaska for Christ’s sake, and my father said without raising his voice: Where? Where can I go? I’m here. I’m in my skin. Here. This is it.

He is lying against the crooked pillows, there are tufts of dark hair on the joints of his toes, the air in the bedroom is stale and smells of tobacco smoke, whisky, sweat, unwashed clothes. The last time it rained, my father didn’t close the window, so the mattress got soaked and the wallpaper got stained but the air was fresh. What does it mean, stupid Irene asked, —the Holy Ghost “departed”? What does it mean? Is it something like God, or Jesus Christ—? Will we be all right?

I am running across the roof of our building. Running, flying, my arms outstretched. No one can catch me. No one can see me. A woman is hanging up laundry in the heat, clothespins and nylon cord and a wicker basket filled with damp clothes, she calls after me but I don’t hear, I am already past the chimneys, jumping across to the next building, no one knows my name. One building and then another and another. The air is wavy with heat. There are expanses of soft tar. There are plywood strips to walk on. Loose bricks, stacks of asphalt siding, beer cans, yellowed newspapers. Last spring a boy held me out over the edge of the roof, he wanted to make me cry but I wouldn’t, he wanted to make me beg him but I wouldn’t, and afterward when they let me go and I ran I heard him say, She runs like a deer—which makes me proud. A deer or a light-footed horse or a cheetah. Running springing up into the air. My hair flying, my arms outstretched. You’re dreaming with your eyes open, my mother says. But I’m not asleep. I’m not in bed. It’s daytime and I’m running across the roofs above Main Street, jumping six feet at a stretch, ten feet, twelve, high up into the air, and when I come down it doesn’t hurt my feet, I feel nothing at all, no more than a deer or a horse or a cheetah would, not looking to the left or right.

Once some of us climbed down the fire escape here and went into an opened window into a corridor, but we couldn’t figure out where we were. An old fat woman in a bathrobe chased us back out. You’re the ones, she said, I’m going to call the police, but we climbed back out and ran across the roof laughing. We didn’t take anything. But we were blamed. Irene told my mother. Some kids had stolen somebody’s mail including a check, so we were blamed but it wasn’t our fault, I didn’t even know who had done it. We should burn the building down, I said. The whole damn row of buildings down. See how they like it then.

I am eleven years old, I have stopped growing, the school nurse says I must bruise easily. What are these marks on the backs of your legs? And I was so ashamed, when the nurse made us all take off our shoes and socks, and my feet weren't clean. Don't cry, one of the girls said. But I wasn't crying.

Clothespoles and television antennae and pigeons, and pigeon droppings all over. Which is why you can't run up here barefoot. That, and the hot tar. The hot asphalt. It makes me dizzy to look over the edge, the girls are always saying, but we're only five floors up, the buildings along Main Street aren't very high, nothing like the Wolcott Building where we played in the elevators: fifteen floors not counting the basements. Is someone calling after me? Is it Momma shouting my name? I am running downstairs now, in the dark. I know which building this is, at the far end of the block, I'll come out on the street between the La Mode Women's Fashions and Dutch Boy Paint & Paper.

Whoa, little horsey! old Mr. Ledbetter says.

Don't you touch me, I whisper. And duck under his arm.

Why did I go all the way out to Waterman Park, they will ask me afterward. Was I crazy, to take the bus three miles alone, to go out there by myself. . . . The woman stumbling in the grass, in the high grass along the canal bank, wasn't anyone I knew. I really didn't look. I shut my eyes, I pressed my hands against my ears. She was Momma's age maybe. She had hair the color of Aunt June's—dark brown that looked maroon, like she'd dunked it in purple ink. The red scarf around her neck was one of those filmy chiffon scarfs Irene bought at Woolworth's. You tied them around your neck just for the looks of it. Or around your head if your hair was up in curlers.

Once when they were fighting and Irene was at the roller rink with her boy friend I ran away to my uncle's and aunt's house across town—that was a long time ago, the summer before. My aunt hid me in the bathroom where my little cousins couldn't peek at me. She washed my face, and brushed my hair except for the snarls, and hugged me, and said not to cry. She asked about my father. Wasn't he seeing that doctor any more, wasn't he seeing any doctor? She asked about my mother—"Why doesn't she ever give me a call? I miss her"—but I didn't know how to answer. I told her I wanted to live at her house. I wasn't going back home. I made her promise not to telephone my mother and say I was there.

She let me make popcorn for myself and my little cousins. I melted butter in a tin measuring cup on the stove. But I shook too much salt on the popcorn—I wasn't used to her salt shaker.

She promised not to call my mother but she must have called because my mother and father both came to get me, in a car borrowed from the people who lived next door. I ran to hide under the stairs. I wasn't crying but I was afraid. When they pulled me out I told Aunt June I hated her and wished she was dead. So Momma slapped me. I knew she would slap me. I didn't care, I wasn't crying. I wish I could close my eyes and see Aunt June's face but I can't. I mean, the way she was then. So many years ago. The house on Ingleside Avenue, the red-brick fake siding, my youngest cousin still in diapers. She wasn't as pretty as my mother. But she was pretty. She was just a young woman, wasn't she?—maybe twenty-six, twenty-seven years old. A mole on her cheek, the maroon-gleaming hair in a pageboy, crimson lipstick, her eyebrows penciled in like Elizabeth Taylor's—too heavy and dark for her narrow face. I can't see her now. There isn't any young woman there. I open my eyes and see an angry old woman staring right through me. Her scalp shows through her thin white hair and her eyes are badly bloodshot. She can't talk now because of the throat cancer—because of the operation. She's angry at me because I am still alive. Because I told

her I hated her that day, and wished she was dead. But I never meant it. God will forgive me. Unless God is angry too.

I am running inside the store windows, one after another after another. And in the windows of cars parked at the curb. The lady shoppers are annoyed with me but I don't pay any attention to them, I don't even look at them, no one knows my name. The window of the jewelry store, and the window of the discount drug store, and the long wide windows of Woolworth's, a shadow-girl running, weightless, quick as a deer. My father says it's no point in going back to Isle Royale to work for the National Parks Service, it's no point going back to visit my grandparents in the northern peninsula, or looking for a job, or taking up his church work again (after he was discharged from the hospital he'd gone around door-to-door with the Bible for a few months but I don't know all that happened—Momma won't tell us): it's no point going anywhere because all spots are the same identical spot in God's mind and he was perfectly happy where he was. But I wanted to take the bus out to Waterman Park because I loved it there. Because I was so happy the times we went there.

Except once. But I didn't tell anyone.

That time, at the Jaycees' picnic, Momma and Aunt June took us all out. I won first prize in the ten-to-twelve-year-old foot race, and was given a silver dollar, and a boy named Pat I knew from school, he was in the seventh grade, asked me if he could see it. He said he'd never seen a real silver dollar before. So I showed it to him. Can I hold it? he said. I didn't want to give it to him, I said, Why?—you can see it. No, he said, coming closer, I just want to hold it for a second. I had it in my hand. Come on, he said, let's see, and I didn't want to but I held it up, and he snatched it out of my fingers and ran away behind the refreshment-and-restrooms building with the little tower on top. I cried but didn't tell anyone, not even Irene. I told her I lost the silver dollar. "Then that's double bad luck," she said.

My father says he's proud of his little girl. Proud of both his little girls. But he doesn't want to talk because his head starts to ache and because there isn't anything to say he hasn't said already. Also the light hurts his eyes. Also my voice hurts his ears. "If I had it in me to love anyone I would love you," he says, shaking his cigarette ash in the ashtray, "but you know the Holy Ghost saw fit to depart from me leaving just this husk and whited sepulchre, and I can't lift a finger in rebellion. 'The Spirit bloweth where it will.' Do you know what that means? That means everything."

My mother begins to cry. Short ugly sobs like hiccups. My father turns away as if the sight disgusts him. But he doesn't say anything. He isn't angry. He never gets angry any longer.

"I don't want to taste blood," he says. "Not ever again."

The black bus driver doesn't seem to think it's strange that I have climbed up into the bus by myself, dropped two nickels into the fare box, gone to sit by one of the windows at the rear of the bus. My heart is beating like crazy. There is a queer sensation in the pit of my stomach. To be riding the bus alone! Out to the park alone! But I don't have my bathing suit. I won't be able to swim in the pool. Two Sundays before, Irene and I went out with a carload of kids, the mother of one of Irene's girl friends drove us out, we swam all afternoon in the pool and had a picnic lunch before coming back home. But now I'm alone. Now I'm going to be alone for the rest of my life.

The seashell ashtray is a souvenir of Tampa, Florida. At its center a miniature mermaid has been fashioned partly out of creamy pink shells, her coiled fish tail glittering prettily, her blue eyes blank and staring. She has seaweed hair that hides her breasts. She is very shapely. But no one admires her any longer, she's been discolored with tobacco, ashes, grime from my father's fingers. No one sees her any longer.

The ashtray sits on my father's chest or abdomen, rising gently, falling. Gradually it becomes filled with ashes and then the ashes are dumped into a wastebasket. I can see my father's crinkly chest hair through his undershirt, curly-red going gray. And under his arms. I can remember how his hair used to grow close about his temples, and in warm weather it would curl damp on his forehead. But now he is going bald. His eyes are a strange pale pebble-color, not blue and not gray, but lighter than his skin. Why is his forehead so creased?—and the cheeks too. He is always thinking. He frowns, makes faces, runs his nicotine-stained forefinger hard across his front teeth. "I don't trust myself out there," he has said. He means out the window, out on the street. Anywhere outside. "I don't want to taste blood ever again."

He smokes Camels. The bed and the floor are littered with cellophane wrappers and those little red cellophane strips. The brand of whisky varies, why can't I remember the labels on the bottles, why are they so much less distinct than the cigarettes . . . ?

Sometimes we play gin rummy for pennies but whoever wins has to put the pennies back in the "kitty"—in a cigar box. Sometimes we play checkers, Parcheesi, or one of the games with dice that Irene is crazy about. The three of us shaking the dice in a little black cardboard cup that got soft and damp from our hands, hooting with laughter, exclaiming, while rain hammered against the window a few feet from the bed, and the air in the room was close and stale and cozy and secret. Only the three of us. My mother never played even when she wasn't at work.

My father had a disability pension but something had gone wrong, or hadn't been completed, so the checks never came. My father and mother quarreled about this but my father explained to Irene and me that it was better to go without than to crawl. "They want to make a man crawl," he said. "But the Spirit of the Lord is infused with too much pride for that." So he lies on top of the bedspread smoking his cigarettes and drinking his whisky, at peace. Sometimes he will flick through the newspaper or something I bring home from school, but mainly he reads the Bible. He reads a verse or a page at a time, then leafs through to another section and reads there, his lips working, his forehead sharply creased. Anything he discovers in the Bible is important. But then it is important too to close the book, and open it again at another place, and read any verse his eye happens upon. It is the most important thing in life. It is life. But all the verses are of equal importance.

What is going to happen? Momma's older sister from Trenton asked.

I don't know, Momma said.

I mean—isn't he dangerous? If he was arrested for trying to kill that guy, whoever it was—

That won't happen again, Momma said.

How do you know it won't happen again?

Because it won't.

How do you know, for Christ's sake?

I don't know, Momma said. Go ask him yourself.

He might hurt you or the girls—

Not the girls, Momma said flatly. He's crazy about the girls.

There are a half-dozen scorch marks on the bedspread, a long narrow one on the pillow case. My father says he wasn't asleep but somehow the cigarette slipped from his fingers. He wasn't asleep, the light was on, he'd been studying the Bible. Once at four in the morning he had to beat out a little fire with his hands and he burnt himself so that tears ran down his cheeks from the pain, and my mother screamed at him, screamed and yanked and pulled at the bedclothes, tearing the sheets off the bed, throwing the pillows on the floor. Irene was too frightened to see what was wrong, she just lay there not moving in bed, but I ran out in my nightgown, and there was my mother sobbing and my father with his hands cupped in a strange way, the fingers bent like claws, trying to comfort her. "It wasn't anything," he said. "It was just an accident. Calm down. Calm down. God only meant it as a warning."

At Waterman Park there is sometimes a crippled man who isn't a beggar, a man with funny mottled skin, nothing but stumps for thighs, rolling himself around on a wooden platform with skate wheels attached. He wears gloves so his hands won't be hurt. I never look at him. My eyes dart to him but then lift over his head. Momma says it's rude to stare at a cripple but that isn't why I don't look at him.

This afternoon he's here—pushing himself on his little wooden platform around the wading pool where the small children are splashing and trying to swim. His shoulder and arm muscles are all bunched, his neck is thick as my father's, in spite of the heat he is wearing a felt cap. He pushes himself slowly along the pavement. His movements are precise and rhythmic and unhurried. If you make the mistake of looking into his face you see that one of the eyes is milky and staring off into the air. But the other eye is fixed onto you.

Why did you go out to Waterman Park alone, they will ask. All the way out there alone. You little brat. You liar.

Were you testing God's love for you, my father will ask. But you should know better. You should know that He loves you in any case. You can't injure His love. You can't increase it. You can't even test it.

I am running through the sloshing chlorinated water at the shallow end of the swimming pool, making my way around the other children. I am running barefoot up to my knees in the water, giggling as if someone is chasing me. The skirt of my dress is wet, my underpants are splashed. I want to laugh and shout and scream and kick, pummeling my arms, making a windmill of my arms. I collide with a little girl of six or seven and her head is dunked underwater but it isn't my fault, I keep on running. Someone shouts behind me but I keep on running, waving my arms, squealing as if I am being chased.

I am swinging on one of the swings, kicking myself higher, higher. The sky is empty and very blue. I am stretching my legs as straight as they will go. No one is pushing me. No one calls out to warn me that I am going too high, that I'm being reckless. Suppose I jump off?—and let the swing fly backward?—suppose it strikes the boy swinging beside me? That happened once when I was a little girl. My grandfather was pushing me then and he scolded me. But now no one is watching, no one knows where I am. I can jump off the swing and let it fly back, I can do anything I want.

My head is ringing, my throat feels very dry. I am climbing up the slide, clambering up like a monkey, clowning around. At the top I am going to jump right off. I've done it before, it isn't dangerous, but the soles of my feet will tingle. I don't want to lose my balance and fall by accident. I feel lightheaded all of a sudden. So I go down the slide the way you're supposed to, pushing myself down, the hot metal makes my skin stick, I hear myself whimpering aloud in pain, it's a mistake to be here, something is going to happen, I am

going to be punished. . . . Then I'm safe on the ground again, springing up on my heels. I haven't been burnt. I don't give a damn what happens.

"Moving your hand, see: this is God," my father says, raising his hand slowly in front of his face. "But then—" and here he whips his head around and pretends to be spying on his other hand, halfway behind his back. "—here's God too. All sides. All points. Do you know what that means?" He pauses to look at me. His smile is gentle. "That means everything."

The ice cream cone is melting, chocolate ice cream running down my forearm to my elbow. It's very sweet but hasn't any taste. My throat is aching from all the dust. Suddenly I am angry—suddenly I feel sick to my stomach. I let the ice cream cone drop onto the grass. Something is wrong but I don't know what it is. I don't know how to name it.

I am very excited, but I don't know where to run. I can run and run and run. I'll never get tired or hungry, I can run forever. Jumping into the air, leaping, landing on my toes and springing up again, who will stop me?—who knows where I am? Momma wiped her eyes with her knuckles and pushed past me, she didn't care that I was peeking in on them, she didn't scold. Behind her my father was saying, "I love you, you know that. I love you first last and always." He spoke quietly, he never raises his voice.

Can you fall asleep with your eyes open? I wonder. I have been standing staring at some pigeons picking in the garbage. Five, six, seven of them. Beautiful wings, tail feathers. Pebble-colored eyes. The beaks picking, striking, never making a mistake. But if one pigeon comes too close to another it's chased away. The pigeons are actually very angry—you wouldn't want them to peck at your outstretched hand. You wouldn't want them to peck at your eyes.

Can you see things when you're awake? I wonder. Like dreams. Like wisps and bits of dreams. But with your eyes open.

There is a snapshot in blurred blazing color of my father and a red fox, taken up at Isle Royale on the lake, when he worked for the government for eight months. My father is wearing a blue nylon Windbreaker and a wool cap, he's squatting, grinning at the camera, and the fox is only a few yards away, his slender snout turned three-quarters toward my father. It looks as if the fox is grinning too. My father is very handsome but the visor of the cap cuts across his eyes making a dark shadow. Whoever took the picture faced the sun too directly, the scene is over-exposed, blazing with light. "Your father had to get away for a while but it doesn't mean he stopped loving us," Momma explained. She explained this to everyone she met.

The program my father was hired for had something to do with charting the movements and patterns of behavior of timber wolves. Whether their population was stable or not. Whether their prey—deer, moose, rabbits—was stable. At first he loved the work because of the solitude, the silence, for weeks on end. Then the work began to sicken him: he had to examine the part-devoured carcasses of animals, he had to take photographs, keep records. He still limped from the accident at the foundry and the cold weather—sometimes it was 30° below zero, not counting the wind-chill—made the injury worse. So he came home. "I never stopped loving you," he said. "Did you stop loving me?"

I can hear the crippled man grunt as he pulls himself along on his wooden platform, but I don't look up. If I don't see him he can't see me. The pigeons are still pecking in the garbage, squabbling over a hot-dog bun. Rushing at one another with their wings outstretched. Is it still the same time, hasn't anything changed?—the sun will never move in the sky.

Dear God I am so afraid of what is going to happen. Dear God forgive me my sins. Help me to be a good girl.

Momma keeps saying: "Things are getting better now, the worst is over."

Momma keeps saying, pouring some whisky for herself while she's talking on the telephone: "He needs me. He loves me. I love him. It isn't the way you think."

A boy of about seventeen is crouched in the rose garden, taking photographs of a bride and her new husband, everyone is smiling, laughing, calling out, maybe they're a little drunk. If I was behind the married couple I could get in the picture but I'm on the wrong side, behind the photographer, peeking through a trellis. There are five middle-aged women in the wedding party, all dressed up, corsages on their shoulders, hats with pretty straw brims, but only three men. No one pays any attention to me. The bride in her long white beautiful dress, with her lace veil hanging down over her back, smiles toward me but doesn't see me. I can roll my eyes and stick out my tongue like I'm choking, it won't make any difference.

I am a snorting horse, a moose with its head lowered, galloping along the path, kicking up gravel. The hell with them staring at me—I don't give a damn. The North Pole is in one direction, the Equator in another, but there isn't anywhere to go that isn't God.

Now I am running along the edge of the park, an angry little heart is beating in the center of my forehead. You aren't supposed to climb down, the signs say Warning, pebbles and rocks and hunks of dried mud are coming loose, you can hurt yourself falling, my hand is scraped and bleeding a little but there isn't much pain, the sensation is mainly numb, the dust will clot the bleeding and make it stop. I am singing at the top of my lungs. Singing and laughing. I will never go back home again: I will live in the park forever.

Did you stop loving me? someone whispers. . . . loving me, loving me?

I am all hooves and wings and flashing antlers. Scaly rippling sides.

Then suddenly I see them: a man and a woman down by the canal: but I've seen them before, those two, on the canal bank in the high grass, and there isn't anything I can do to stop it.

The man is jerking the woman along, his fingers are closed around her bare upper arm. She is already crying. She shouldn't cry, it makes him all the more angry, they don't like tears. I know he's going to kill her but I can't get away. I can't stop it.

His blue coat is slung over his right shoulder, his trousers are streaked with dust. He is wearing a necktie made of some shiny silvery material. His hair is no color at all—trimmed short—standing up stiff and straight as a brush. He has a pig's snout, his face is red and mottled. His voice isn't raised but you can tell he's very angry.

The woman isn't pretty. Her lips are too thick and blubbery. She has a double chin that wobbles as he pulls her along, I can't stand to look at her, hair dyed maroon and teased out around her head like straw, filmy red scarf around her neck, high heels that make her stagger in the grass. She is wearing one of those off-the-shoulder blouses with the elastic neck, they're in Sears' window, Mexican or Spanish they're supposed to be, and a red cotton skirt with a black elastic belt, cinching her waist in tight so that her fat hips bulge, and her fat breasts. When the worst of it begins I am crouched down hiding, my eyes are shut tight and my hands are pressed over my ears. I don't hear her screaming, I don't hear the thuds, the blows. I don't hear a thing.

I hadn't been asleep. But when I opened my eyes I was in the park again, in the rose garden again, crouching behind the trellis. It was still daylight. Maybe no time had passed. Children were still playing in the pool, my head felt very strange but I wasn't bleeding anywhere so maybe everything was all right. The roses were very beautiful, I hadn't looked at them before. The wedding party had gone.

I knew it was later because I was so hungry. The sun had shifted in the sky.

I started crying and couldn't stop.

A woman in yellow shorts came by, another woman joined her, a patrolman, a small staring crowd. My knees had given out and I was sitting on the grass. I was afraid of wetting myself and soiling my underpants but I couldn't stop crying. The woman was lying on her back, her skirt was pulled up, her thick pale lardy flesh exposed. One high-heeled shoe had been twisted off her foot but the strap was still attached to her ankle. I didn't see any blood. I didn't hear anything. The man's necktie had flapped over his shoulder as he ran away but I didn't really see it, I wasn't watching. I was crouched down behind a pile of rocks hiding with my hands pressed against my ears. My heart beat so hard in my chest I knew it was going to burst.

They were asking me what was wrong but I couldn't answer. Was I sick? Had I hurt myself? Had someone hurt me? I couldn't get my breath to answer. Had I fallen off the slide? A woman told the patrolman she had seen me on the playground earlier, I had been acting "strangely." It was her opinion that I was lost. More people drifted by. Children staring. Was I lost? Where were my parents? Were they at the park? What was my name?

I was shivering so hard the policeman took a beach towel from one of the women and wrapped it around me. He said I'd be all right now, nothing bad would happen. But my teeth kept chattering. I couldn't get my breath.

It's hysteria, the policeman said, you see it all the time. He wore sunglasses with very dark green lenses. His voice was kindly, he wasn't scolding.

In the ambulance going to the hospital I did soil my underpants. But nobody said a word about it afterward.

After the accident at the foundry when two men on my father's shift were killed, and my father was hospitalized, the "great silence" came over him more and more often.

He would be lying in bed. Or walking with a cane along the corridor. Or joking with the nurses. Or staring out the window over the parking lot. ("Sometimes it was the way the sunlight flashed on a windshield: simple as that," he says.) There would be a pressure in his ears, and a deafening roar, and then silence. Just—silence.

He couldn't hear anything. He couldn't swallow or blink. Nothing had changed around him but it was all at a distance because he was in God's mind. He could hear God's thoughts, which were identical with his own. "There is the first half of my life," he says, "and then the second. I'm in the second now. I was in it all the time but I didn't know. God had been with me all the time but I didn't know. You think you're alone—that makes you happy when you're a kid—I mean, you can get away with anything, do anything, right? But God is with you all the time. You're not free. Even the thought of it, being free, it's God's thought in your head. Whatever you think or do, God has got there first. So you can't make mistakes. Even the warnings He sends you aren't mistakes."

Sometimes when it snows—when it has been snowing for days on end, as it has this winter—I stand at the window and hear the silence all around me. I know it will swallow me up someday the way it did my father.

But even this thought— isn't it God's? Of course it is.

In the hospital I started to tell them about the woman by the canal, what the man had done to her, but my words were garbled and I couldn't get my breath. If I closed my eyes I could see her but when I opened them I couldn't remember what I was saying. There was blood on the lower part of her jaw. There was blood, a widening circle of blood, on her blouse.

He had killed her. Then he'd run away. But not light on his feet, not leaping and prancing. He hadn't any hooves or wings. The blood had splashed onto his shirt. I hated them both—they were so ugly.

"You never saw anything," my mother tells me, whispering, leaning over the bed, giving me a secret shake. "You mind your own business!"

Someone was sent out to search by the canal but of course there wasn't any body, there wasn't any evidence of blood or struggle. A single high-heeled shoe was found in the grass.

"She makes things up," my mother says, not looking at me.

Later, after a woman was reported missing, they dragged the canal but never found any body. By then I was back home (I'd only been in the hospital overnight, in the children's ward), by then school had started.

"You just tell them you don't remember," my mother says. "Tell them you don't know. Anyway you made it all up—didn't you?" My father's door has been closed against me for a long time. If I press my ear against it I can hear him singing and humming to himself, sometimes Irene and one of her girl friends are in there with him, playing gin rummy, or shaking the dice until they rattle in the old cardboard cup. The three of them laugh together, I think they must want me to hear. "Anyway you made it up," my mother says, lighting a cigarette, staring at me, "didn't you?"

She has never said anything about the \$3.87 from her bureau drawer. Which means I didn't take it—which means that nothing has happened. But my father's door is closed against me for eleven days. I am chipping at the plaster in the wall beside my bed with a safety pin, to mark each day.



Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Notes from the Northwest

The following continues the series originally called Notes from New England, begun in issue 24-25 (Winter 1998), and resumed after a long absence in issue 59 (October 2006). It is intended as a gathering-place for observations of various lengths upon the world around me. It will be culled, like much of my writing, from my notebooks, and perhaps these thoughts will be expanded upon sometimes as well.

On the Occupation

May 6, 2007

George W. Bush and his crime family have ruined so many lives, and maimed so many others, that this planet has been damaged by his illegal ascendancy to the leadership of the US. That he has no support left is just. That those in his party who would succeed him are looking pathetic is a dark joke, one we must follow though on the punchline: seeing whichever saggy old white man among them gets the Republican nomination swept to the curb with an historic low percentage of the vote in the presidential election.

This world has a lot of healing to do, and I don't think one person, even an American president, can do it all, or maybe even lead it all. But I do think leading the US back into the family of nations, and repudiating everything this fascist nazi fucked up cabal of petrocratic endtime lunatics has tried to do is a start.

That's the best I hope for in the next election. Get a Democrat in there intent on picking up the BIG shit shovel and start moving it away. This nation's leadership is an murderous embarrassment, and I would vote for them to be taken to the Hague and judged as war criminals on the world stage.

Bush had his last chance with the funding bill he just vetoed. He could have signed it, got the exit from Iraq going, declared some kind of victory. But, no, he is insane to the end. Hiding in his bunker while Berlin burns.



May 29, 2007

I don't believe that the two major American political parties are indistinguishable. Had we not taken the Congress from Bush in 2006, it is much more likely that he already would have led an invasion into Iran. Instead, he huffs and puffs and does little. Similarly, Nixon's plan to conduct a limited nuclear strike on Vietnam was stopped by the anti-war marches in DC around the same time.

Are the Democrats weak and beholden to some of the same crippling money pimps as the Republicans? Of course.

But who belongs to the Democratic Party? Who drives its policy, pushes its ideals when they manifest? The middle-class, minority groups, women's groups, labor, and currently, peace activists.

I'm not a Democrat, haven't been one in many years, but it is obvious to me by reading that there is in that party much more hope for the future than in the Republican party.

Two sides of the same coin? I don't think so in ways that can be distinguished by voting record, by speeches, by who peoples each party. There are differences. If there weren't, we'd be more fucked than we are, more hopeless.

I for one am not hopeless. Yet I doubt I believe in politics much more than many do. I believe enough to involve myself when something like a major war is going on, but long to back away, far away. I can't right now. The evil fuckers are trying to wear us down, day by day. I for one will not concede to them what is not theirs. They push, I push back. They bite, I bite harder. They back away, I keep fucking pushing.

We can't give up. No choice. We won back the Congress, we'll win the presidency, and then we'll push whichever one wins to get this world back to some light.

I can't let myself think of any alternative because it involves bars and muzzles. Ya know?

May 29, 2007

I love political activist Cindy Sheehan. I have admired her actions and her writings since she stood nearly alone two summers ago in Crawford and faced down a cowardly, owned, fake man with Presidential powers. She is soft-voiced, intelligent, funny, a person I wish I could know, comfort, befriend.

In announcing her retirement from the peace movement, she is doing what she has to do. She is tired, sad, broke. Broken. She took on everything and got beaten pretty hard. I wish she had more of a support group around her so she wouldn't feel so exposed and now needing to retreat so badly. But she is strong. She will endure.

What she did two summers ago will remain an historical fact and a brave human act of defiance. Remember the man who stood in front of the tank in China? On that level. What she does now I hope has much to do with healing.

I foresee an end to the War in the autumn not because of moral reasons, but expedient ones. The Republicans have to ditch the disastrous legacy of George W Bush. I don't think they will. Not in the least. The Democrats have to spine up enough to convince the progressive movement to support their candidates in 2008. It's pathetic, all of it. Beyond tragedy.

Cindy, I love you. You are a good person, and I wish you every good thing in your life. Nobody can cure your grief, but we can send our deepest regard from afar, and promise that the fight isn't over.

Now go home, rest. Eat some good food. Listen to some good music. Grieve. Stay alive, and in time, more than that . . . if you choose someday to return to public life in some capacity, many people will be cheering.

June 1, 2007

Of course the invasion of Iran isn't off the table. But the political shift in the landscape is palpable. The Occupation was once seen as a high idealistic goal, bring American-style representative democracy to the Middle East. Even if they didn't ask for it. Which they didn't. But to some, at one time, it sounded good.

Now it's a bloody bad mess and the country has turned against Bush in a big way. He can't get any kind of legislation through. He's totally stalled, on immigration, Social Security "reform," etc. Mired in scandal such as the Attorney General situation, World Bank, and so on . . .

At this point, the Occupation is about two issues. 1) getting the Iraqi parliament to sign away their oil, per the "sharing" agreement they are considering that would give oil companies up to 80 percent of the revenues. 2) The 2008 American elections. Everyone up for re-election then is looking at the Occupation, the polls, and seeing how it will affect him or her. It's simple. They talk about the fall because that's as close as they are willing to cut it. By when the primaries start, everyone wants to declare victory, no matter what that looks like.

Bush/Cheney are in their "last throes," not running for office again, having lost pretty much everything they stole, though not the Supreme Court, but their fanaticism to change the world in their own twisted images, it's over.

So, aside from the possibility of marshal law, no elections, etc etc, and the tragic truth of how many more will die in this Occupation, this situation is winding down. And as for marshal law, don't look for it. Big business needs its worker bees on all levels, can't have them in camps or running for the hills. As long as we punch our clocks every day, a small number of men make a lot of fucking money. Marshal law? Not good for business.

Sad, sorry, cynical state of affairs, all of this. But, oddly, not hopeless.

June 1, 2007

I believe that Al Gore lives with the pain of the 2000 US election every single day, especially those when the death count in the Occupation is high, or when the Bush-packed Supreme Court makes yet another decision in favor of the Corporate Overlords.

He made his choice, and he'll be defending it for the rest of his life, no matter what he does day to day. The fact that he doesn't take his wealth and crawl off to a far island, but instead gets on crowded airplanes day after day, year after year, to help others better understand their world, that bespeaks the kind of man he is. He is passionate, driven, and he

cares. He served in public office for two decades, and he has never stopped serving since.

Many of us want him to run for President, to take what we believe was stolen from him, and all of us. I don't know if he will, but if he does, I'm going to man phone banks, I'm going to knock on doors, I'm going to do whatever I can to help him win. Clinton, Obama? Maybe. Depends how they are doing.

June 13, 2007

It will be of necessity a bipartisan effort to end the Occupation of Iraq, since Bush will veto any timetable for withdrawal, and we need veto override numbers in the Congress. Further, I've said this bipartisan effort will likely occur this fall as a result of the election cycle for 2008 beginning in earnest. Republicans are abandoning Bush like rats from a sinking ship. They're up for re-election next year; he's not. It's that simple.

The question at this point is what kind of "lesser" presence we will have for the next couple of years. As long as Bush is in power, agitating his self-generated enemies, I don't think the military will want to leave entirely. It will take a new President with a commitment to diplomacy, peace, and the United Nations to bring the scare level on all sides down. Politics these days is rarely about hope, and it seems like each of us feels this deep down and daily.

But, honestly, I need to bring some hope with me along my days. Need it, and am hoping enough other people need it to make those mostly cowardly sold-out bastards in DC act in humanity's, not corporate's or religious endtime's interests. All we can do is try, and try again.

June 15, 2007

Regarding the Democrats ending the Occupation, they chose to yield to political pressure in continuing the funding through September. I was as pissed off as everyone else. I believe their effort will yield better fruit in the fall.

That said, every time someone says both parties are the same, that there is no difference, I will simply ask this: if Al Gore had taken his rightful place as president in 2000, would the US be occupying Iraq? No. It's really that simple. Would the Occupation have gone on this long if Bush hadn't controlled the Congress from before 9/11 to January 2007? No. Would Gore be trying to privatize Social Security, or turn millions of immigrants in this country into criminals? No.

The argument that there is no difference is old, is clichéd, is wrong, and I accord it no respect any longer. I hear it and it makes me furious. This is a participatory democratic republic! Are you, disgruntled member of the progressive counterculture, voting? Are you involved? If the Democrats in your view too closely resemble the Republicans, are you starting a third party?

Anyone who is sitting back and waving it all away with a self-righteous sneer is PART OF THE PROBLEM. I'm not just talking about the US. I'm talking about anyone who lives in any human society. We each have an obligation to ourselves as individuals, to our fellow humans, to the world at large.

End the Occupation? Bring justice to all? Save the world from the human-made poisons and garbage harming it? It's in each of our hands. Today. Now. This hour. The next.

Nobody has any right to ignore the good and bad happening in this world. Each of us is obliged to respond. Whether we do or not, and in what numbers, and how, is the great mystery of being human on this physical plane. Nobody can compel anyone to do the right thing, or indeed to define in one way or another what that right thing might be.

But I implore the smart, aware people reading this: we have the power in OUR hands, we CAN make life better for all. There IS hope everywhere, scattered round, waiting to be gathered into an awesome power that could sweep away the iniquitous billionaire multinational corporate criminals in charge. In truth they rule from mountains of sand, and we bear in our numbers and potential the power of the ocean.

June 16, 2007

I have no choice but to believe that the 2006 elections will reverberate for both major parties. The major progressive groups like Moveon.org have expressed their fury, and their intentions to make it very hard for Democrats to run next year who do not step up to end the Occupation. That's why both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama voted to end it. They are under tremendous pressure from a roused and angry progressive base, and especially in Hillary's case, very obviously moving toward what people are demanding. It is not going to stop and they will continue to move leftward as it goes on.

This is how the Vietnam War ended, it's why Nixon didn't nuke Vietnam for that matter. He saw the millions swelling up to his door, as the old Creedence song goes.

People in massive numbers—going to the polls, staying away, voting for a third party candidate—have effect. But politics is slow, even when there are good people trying to accomplish things. We don't have the votes yet for a bipartisan end to the Occupation, a veto-proof majority. Had they been truly brave, the Democrats would have simply said: no more money. They didn't. The corporate media would have played them as denying money to basic needs for troops in the field, however much a lie this is. They turned yellow. They need the Republicans on board. If I didn't believe in this scenario, one many progressive writers are agreeing on, I would not say it here.

My opinion is simple: End the Occupation. Impeach and convict Bush/Cheney. Restore order and justice to the system, as much as its shadowy corporate overlords will allow. I belong to no party because I really don't believe in political parties, especially just two, as the ideal way to govern human affairs.

My faith is in the way the system has of righting itself enough to keep along, I've lived in it for 43 years. I've seen it swing one way then the other, not staying so long at either end.

I'd like to know how others reading these page are opposing the Occupation, pushing for election reforms, for third parties, for social justice, for a human world based on justice for all and loving care of the planet. I see a lot of grouching among so-called progressives, but I don't see a lot of action. I've been putting myself out more and more of late, contacting my congress persons, marching against the Occupation and in defense of immigration rights, writing online and in print about these matters. It's all well and good to have a lively debate about Iraq or global warming, but it's not enough. I decided I had to do more than just post links on the Internet, however useful this is for spreading information. I

had to take action in fleshspace, put my face in the crowd of agitators and resisters.

I urge people reading these pages to do the same. We are cursed to live in interesting times, but they are ours, and what are we going to do about it? Just feed, breed, puff, and die? Not me. What about you?



Donovan Bess



LSD: The Acid Test... and beyond

Published in the April 1966 issue of Ramparts

I. Exploring Inner Space

There are various ways of dropping out of our modern condition. One way is to visit or live in a country like Guatemala, which hangs onto its sanity by lagging a century or two behind. Another way out is psychosis although, on a long-term basis, it is reported to be too lonely. Alcoholism suits many Americans, but it is only a makeshift. Marijuana smoking is growing in popularity. Other Americans toy with religious ecstasy, but usually not in a serious way.

Visible people really want out, this time. They are willing to risk something. Some of them find revolutionary opportunities outside: they sit in, lie in, sleep in, teach in, think in. Others find the scene inside; that is the radical way, for it breaks with our tradition of looking for salvation in deeds alone.

Exploring inner space is as revolutionary as exploring outer space. You risk a lot when you ingest LSD-25 (d-lysergic acid diethylamide tartrate). A young man told me that after he swallowed 250 micrograms of this agent, "my whole self flowed down from my head and between my knees and spread out in front of me, face up, like a deck of cards. . . I think that if I had had time, I would have tried to pray, but there was nothing left in me even to pray with (or so I thought). I was scared shitless. Then, all of a sudden, I was inside an absolutely pure white light that softly held me up over an abyss. I guess in the showdown there is something that holds you up. I never cried since I was five years old, and that's the way I cried."

A middle-aged professor said: "I was fifteen feet above myself, looking down on myself in the chair reading a book."

If you had a sufficient dose, and you brought yourself honestly into the experience, and you brought in your hang-ups and kept defending them, what happened to you was that you died.

But the heart keeps beating and the lungs keep breathing and eventually, somebody gets born into this vacated body. Most of these people find out for the first time what it is to be really alone. This discovery certainly is not special to LSD voyages. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., for example, has told how, as a young man he met his naked self in a session of terrible aloneness, and made this the base of a warm and abundant man.

During an LSD session, you are apt to feel like an explorer who landed on Mars with no return fuel. One San Francisco executive said that after ingesting 350 micrograms of LSD, plus about 300 milligrams of mescaline (which has a kindly effect): "The ceiling above me became a black sky filled with universes, red, white and blue, whirling at incredible speeds and interlocking with consummate accuracy. This was a very small part of what I thought of as The System. The universes ran in perfect order through The System, faster than light flashes. I had a horrible realization that I was ceasing to exist. I looked around for my LSD guide, and I perceived him as the Manager of The System, who made it all and

controlled it. A very beautiful religious experience happened to me then, that I don't want to talk about today. I wept for all the people I have hurt in my life, including myself.

"The Manager rose from his chair and was fiddling around with some papers in the adjoining room. I was alone. There was no Manager, just myself and all that. That is how I found out that no man runs the universe. After I came out of it, I realized I had been acting in my life as though I could control everything around me."

The LSD veterans say that you have no attentive, familial figures at your side, as you die. Courage is required to meet this aloneness; possibly you traverse the kind of territory Dante did in creating the *Divine Comedy*. Alan Harrington, writing of his LSD session, tells of heaven and hell, and reports that the outcome "provided an atheist with what can be described as a religious or anyway metaphysical insight, and this has not dimmed." Medical doctors and psychologists generally describe such adventures as hallucinations. Those who have been through it say, "I don't care what you call it—it happened."

II. Running Smack Into Your Essence

Some of the doubters seem to be upset by LSD's capacity for letting people make themselves warm and loving. Take the case of the California physicist who sacrificed himself for science by taking LSD. He followed the orthodox procedure of having with him a guide—a man who had been on the psychedelic journey and therefore was not alarmed by behavior that would seem eccentric to most people. The guide reported: "He went into LSD and was speechless for eight hours. . . He ran smack into his essence and he was so overwhelmed and so amazed and disconcerted about what this brought home to him that he was completely unable to communicate." When the physicist's wife and daughter showed up at the end of the session, this man wept. He had never cried before, apparently, and he cried quietly for a long time. He was taken to a motel with an LSD-sitter. After a few hours, he sent for a colleague from his office, "threw his arms around this guy and burst into tears."

Such conduct does not invite those of us who think it may be bad taste to embrace in the style of the Russians in novels. We also have a vague fear that the LSD movement might convert the country into one vast, schmaltzy Chautauqua meeting. Strong human emotion seems to emerge almost invariably after the cosmic aloneness of a session, and the habit of physical touching continues with these returned LSD travelers. It is hard for us to approve such touching because we have developed a non-contact style of living. Coldness makes an American seem more successful; warmth indicates an indifference to money. If you sit down beside someone on the bus, he is scared that your leg or arm might contaminate his body because you are supposed to be a stranger. You may be merely an un-introduced friend or lover.

What most people temporarily lose, during the LSD session, is the ego: the part that is thought to direct, supervise and plan for the personality; the part that considers the individual body to be private property. The ego is possessive. But under LSD the ego dies—so it is not so hard afterward to suffer little deaths, such as being embarrassed when your body gets touched in public.

The psychedelic death is especially lonely—lonelier, perhaps, than for the soldier who physically dies in a Vietnamese field hospital. He at least has the comfort of cuddling up in the image of his mother. Under LSD you have no such bourgeois comfort; you have no familial figure at all. You die grown up. If you can hang onto that, afterward, you can offer society some adult values. You came to this point in a rite of passage as explicit, as terrible and as meaningful as those rites used in aboriginal Australia.

There are not many rites of passage left. At puberty, American boys are not incarcerated for hours of terror with the men, to help them cross the sexual frontier into manly responsibility and privileges. The pain has been taken out of childbirth and the virginity out of brides. Physical dying still offers a ritualistic opportunity, but Americans take little advantage of it. President Kennedy had a feeling for ritual; he was studied by the young, who are trying to hack out their own passages, without rites, to some frontier beyond the horrors promoted by the so-called adults of the Johnsonian era.

III. Me Instead of "Mother"

Young people accept LSD as a fact of the times. They are fed up with being latent human beings. The purpose behind their experiments is to find the humanity they were cheated of by ersatz education, electronic conditioning, and living in families led by synthetic productions labeled "mother" and "father." The world they are seeking was identified tentatively by William James after he got high on nitrous oxide (laughing gas). He concluded that "our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different." Many people try to penetrate this filmiest of screens at their local Pentecostal church. But in the past decade, even members of the upper-class churches, including the Episcopalians ("God's frozen people"), have developed Pentecostal symptoms. Some of them gather in secret, like early Christians, to "speak in tongues," in an unintelligible language they believe to be of divine origin.

Older people seem to prefer to try to deal with the quality of modern life by addiction to alcohol or television. Younger people prefer more awareness. You don't have to ingest LSD or peyote or psilocybin or belladonna to have your mind expanded. Last spring, at a symposium on LSD at the Esalen Institute of Big Sur Hot Springs, on the California coast, a young pediatrician rose to declare: "I have never taken LSD, but it's changed my whole life." He had "turned on" only by listening to the rapt talk of those who had crossed the psychedelic frontier, and by being gazed at from eyes made big-seeming and luminous from having seen with extra dimension.

The innocents at this symposium were warned that they would have to undergo psychological shock treatment if they wished to break through to "some kind of self beyond our selves." Richard Marsh, a San Francisco State College professor who had a series of LSD trips, told them that during the experience that hell rages relentlessly as long as a man's ego refuses to give way to what seems to be a threat to his sanity. He illustrated this by telling how a Zen student held onto a shrub to keep from falling off the side of a steep cliff and suffered terribly until, finally, it was not endurable to hold on any longer. "He let go," said Marsh, "and fell three feet."

Nicolas Berdyaev has written (in *The Divine and the Human*) that in "the new revelation of the Holy Spirit. . . consciousness passes into super-consciousness and a world is revealed which lies beyond the sphere in which subject and object fall apart." This is an inadvertent definition from a deeply religious man of a much-reported experience of unity while under the influence of LSD. They usually return to the workaday world with a distrust of words—which seem quite unable to retrieve the values perceived during the trip. When they try to use words about it, they hear themselves being called "kooky"; or if they are taken seriously, they find that the words they choose merely confuse or annoy. "I never try to tell people about it any more," said one traveler from inner space. "Can you tell a blind man

what a sunset really is? Can you explain in words what lobster tastes like? What can you say about love to a man who has never been in love?"

The plight of the returned travelers can be summed up in this statement by one of them:

"Suppose I dig Beethoven's 15th Quartet—all the nuances, the phrases that are exquisite to the edge of torture, the fern-filled, adagio recesses, the tender, demonic violin screaming that drives you wild, and suppose I dig William Blake and Miles Davis and Giotto and the chess play of Reshevsky and the sublime arc of Willie Mays' arm throwing to home plate. Now suppose I got this way all at once in six hours, by taking LSD.

"Suppose I have a wolfhound who loves me, and I love him, and we have this great and simple love for one another.

"Now, you are that wolfhound if you haven't had the LSD experience that I had. Your dog life is pretty elegant, and you really are warm toward me, but you are so limited. Suppose you were talking wolfhound and you asked me about my trip? I would have a hell of a time trying to give you any sense of the meaning of any one phrase of the 15th Quartet. The worst thing is, you will begin to dislike me a little—you can't figure out why I have these far-away lights in my eyes. I am loving you more than I ever did, but you don't believe me, because you're afraid of something in me that lives in those far-away lights a great deal.

"I try to tell you that you, too, must do what I did, taking LSD, so that we can come in level, but this makes you so mad that we just stop being friends at all.

"It sounds snobbish, doesn't it? It's not. It's democratic. Join us!"

This is the foundation of LSD evangelism. Once you come upon truths privately that you cannot make public, it is tempting to try to convert non-believers. The prophet for this movement is Aldous Huxley, whose

Doors of Perception, has interested thousands of persons in the mescaline experience. He apparently had a good deal more consciousness to expand in the first place, so his experience had fine quality. Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert, two young Harvard psychology professors, have taken over the psychedelic preaching job. Leary sometimes writes of LSD as though it were a lover. He and Alpert unwisely allowed Harvard students to imbibe LSD in non-clinical settings, to the great irritation of the university. The two professors refused to make their research look respectable: i.e., to behave like rat psychologists. They behaved more like W. B. Yeats and George Moore at an Abbey Theatre rehearsal. Harvard got rid of them.

Leary and Alpert have published a manual called *The Psychedelic Experience*, with instructions about as explicit as those in the booklet you get with your hi-fi components. Follow the instructions, and you are guaranteed "liberation-enlightenment." You are guided into seven levels, such as "for the influence of thought," "for the sexual vision," "for choosing a post-session personality." Presumably you are furnished with a guide who has practiced locating the right page in a hurry. The manual goes so far as to instruct you on how to "obtain Buddhahood in the Central Realm of the Densely Packed."

IV. Give Daddy a Chemistry Set

Willis Harman, a Stanford University professor who has had nine years' research experience with the drug, says LSD is wildly unpredictable. He says the psychedelic agents have been observed to produce hallucinations, to produce a psychotic-like condition, to aid psychotherapy by facilitating recall of early-childhood happenings and uncovering repressed emotions, as well as to open gates to mystical or religious experiences. But the professor

adds: "Which of these effects predominate depends upon the expectations of the subject, the qualities of the persons present with him when he takes the drug, and on the nature of the setting."

LSD was developed in 1943 in Basel, Switzerland, by Dr. Albert Hofmann, who had been working on a new alkaloid compound of lysergic acid derived from ergot, a fungus known to grow on rye and wheat. Since then, there has been considerable medical research in England and some other countries, but in the United States, medical leaders have tried to avoid research that might risk a loss of dignity or prestige. Dr. Roy R. Grinker, Sr., chief editor of *Archives of General Psychiatry*, recently invoked the word "evil" in connection with LSD. While the doctors, psychologists, and public health officials view with alarm, the nation's youth are engaged in massive ad hoc research on themselves. They have moved with enthusiasm into this low-budget approach to transcending—now and then, at least—the American way of life of 1966.

The Food and Drug Administration has put LSD in the category of "a dangerous drug." In the wrong hands, LSD can indeed be dangerous. A 10-year-old boy in New England got hold of a sugar cube saturated with LSD, ate it, and sat for most of a week in front of a TV set that was not connected electrically. He saw a series of programs that existed only in his mind. He was kept out of school for another week, and he had trouble reviving what little ego he had scraped together in his young life. Recently a Boston College student bought an LSD-saturated sugar lump near Harvard Square (which still is the LSD capital of the USA). He went into a temporary schizophrenic state in which he perceived his arms and legs as separated from his torso.

The hazards are minimal, though, when psychedelics are administered under medical supervision, according to Dr. Sidney Cohen, chief psychiatrist at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Los Angeles. After surveying all the clinical work done with LSD so far, he found a suicide rate of one patient per 2500. Psychotic reactions lasting more than 48 hours after ingestion totaled less than two for each 1000 patients, and only two for each 2500 normal volunteers.

LSD is easier to manufacture than corn whiskey was during Prohibition—and goes a lot further. Thomas G. Alexander, an FDA chemist, reported last year that after studying an article in the *Journal of Organic Chemistry*, he went to his laboratory with some ergotamine tartrate and lysergic acid and, after about 40 hours' work, came up with a fairly good facsimile of Sandoz' premium-quality LSD. Dr. Henry B. Bruyn, director of the student health services for the University of California's Berkeley campus, says: "Anybody who has mastered a Gilbert Chemistry set can make LSD."

Primitive chemists through the centuries have developed more than a dozen psychedelic compounds. Western man, if he works at it, probably can find something psychically explosive in the weeds of any vacant lot.

People who swill down a few hundred micrograms of LSD at a party to prove that they're not chicken, sometimes show up at emergency hospitals with schizophrenic symptoms. Some of the temporarily confused drug-takers get tucked into psychopathic wards, where they can suggest themselves into a real psychosis. Dr. Bruyn has drilled his psychiatrists in counter-LSD measures. "My guess," he says, "is that many hospital emergency rooms and physicians are unfamiliar with the quality of the acute panic that can occur with the use of LSD. As a result, the individual sometimes is left in his terrifying emotional state for an unnecessarily long period of time." He has instructed his staff to "dissolve" the panic state by giving an intramuscular injection of 25 milligrams of Thorazine.

LSD/Journals of an Artist's Trip by *Harriette Frances*



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LSD/Journals, continued



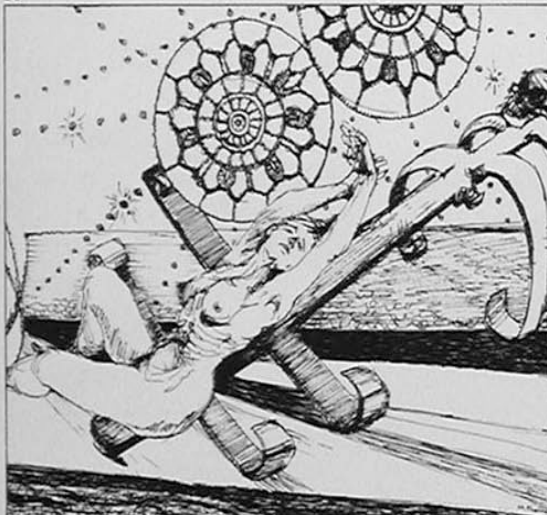
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V. Letting Go Your Ego

Although it is still not illegal to use LSD, it is illegal to sell it. If LSD is outlawed, as marijuana is, the FDA agents will have some picturesque enforcement problems. LSD is so potent a smuggler can get \$10,000 worth of it into a human vagina. But why smuggle when good home brew is plentiful? Perhaps the Federal D-men have to get injunctions to stop the manufacture and sale of Gilbert Chemistry sets.

Some of the LSD people have a tendency to form a subculture. A number of them have settled in primitive parts of Mexico, where they believe they do not have to be “game players” in the American sense. A typical result of one or more LSD sessions is to feel all the persons on the earth are of one family. Men love other men without fear of somebody’s label of homosexuality, and they have pleasant experiences of loving certain women without feeling specifically sexual about it.

The International Foundation for Advanced Study in Menlo Park, California—one of the few places where psychedelic therapy is offered in the United States—has devised exercises for testing how good a man is at letting go of the ego. Subjects are broken in with inhalations of 70 per cent oxygen and 30 per cent CO₂, “sufficient to cause transient dissociation without loss of consciousness.” This works so well, according to another staff member, that one patient even recalled he had been born with the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck. (He had had the unconscious notion that his mother had tried to strangle him.) The man’s mother acknowledged to Center investigators that the birth had been like this. Her son got well.

James Fadiman, a psychologist on the center’s staff, explains why a person needs a guide who has had the experience. “It is as though you have visited Paris in the past and now the patient is visiting Paris. You have a map of the city in your head and when he gets confused or lost, you ask him, ‘Where are you?’ Figuratively speaking, he replies: ‘I am on an island.’ You might say to him, ‘Is there a big church there with twin towers?’ If he says ‘yes’ you realize he has arrived at the Ile de la Cité, and you can help him locate himself. LSD brings up that kind of situation.”

The limited LSD therapy tried out in the United States and Canada has shown some hopeful results in the treatment of alcoholism and narcotic addiction. In the field of individual therapy, where personal growth is the major goal, England is ahead of this country. Experiments there have produced what appear to be astonishing feats of recall. Adults retrieve repressed scenes of horror from the Battle of Britain—and shed unnecessary anxiety that was rooted in such repression. Dr. Frank Lake, who used LSD in his psychiatric practice in Nottingham, cites a number of birth recall cases. One patient had suffered from a pain in his left shoulder, with no organic cause known. He underwent the rebirth experience frequently reported from LSD sessions, and felt “tremendous anxiety” because he thought his left arm was being torn off. At Dr. Lake’s suggestion he asked his mother about his delivery. She told him he had been born with one arm raised and pressed against his head. (The experience of giving birth to a baby while under LSD was reported by a California man. The emerged child, he said, was his renewed self.)

VI. Her First Orgasm

The most radical known LSD investigations have been conducted by Dr. Stanislav Grof of the Psychiatric Research Institute in Prague. He gave in-patients heavy doses of the drug every week for up to 35 weeks. In the later stages of their treatment, Grof said, his

patients had “pleasurable experiences—mystic, religious, transcendental, esthetic. Their low self-esteem is raised. They feel a oneness with other people, with nature. They are able to accept themselves, and others, and the world.” One of his woman patients had tried conventional psychotherapy for eight years to overcome her frigidity. After repeated LSD sessions, she relived moments at age eight when her stepfather raped her and, in a transcendent climax, experienced an orgasm in the consulting room. (There is a clinic at Washington University in St. Louis which may want somebody to look into this. The clinic handles frigid wives and impotent husbands who have remained sexually incomplete despite six months of psychotherapy. A medical doctor and a psychologist coach these husbands and wives on physiological techniques that result in orgasms during laboratory intercourse.)

The U.S. Public Health Service has been slow to fund such projects. The administrators, like the AMA bureaucrats, prefer to play it safe. How would it look if somebody killed himself as the result of an LSD journey underwritten by taxpayers’ money? It is as if the National Science Foundation decided to avoid research on the use of dynamite on the theory that an accident would cause excessive public criticism. Professor Harman says that most approved research projects call for the classic type of graduate-student volunteer—a person who generally has a psychological set against LSD. “Anyone with an interest in taking it,” Harman says, “is immediately disqualified. They get paid to submit to this ‘awful torture’ in the name of science.” It is not surprising that some of these unfortunate volunteers grow paranoid or psychotic, and some have been taken to mental hospitals after their LSD experience.

Probably the United States Army performs more experiments with psychedelic drugs than any other organization in the country, according to Ralph M. Goldman, a political scientist who began a study of possible psycho-chemical weapons while on the faculty of the University of Chicago three years ago. “With the development of effective delivery systems,” he says, “entire armies, communities, and even nations could be put out of commission for two or three days.” Apparently you make a “delivery” when you get enough LSD into the water supply of an enemy city or military base. It is tasteless and odorless, so as a powder it could also be mixed with the base’s sugar supply.

The Army Chemical Corps has expressed its interest in such drugs in a fact sheet in which it observes that “if a man’s ability to integrate time and distance could be impaired, it could seriously interfere with his handling of a jet, or firing of a gun from, or at, a moving tank.” The Corps even seems to have faced the disturbing thought that LSD might infiltrate high commands. Certainly some curious tactical orders would be given if somebody slipped 300 micrograms of this agent into the coffee of a field general.

The Corps fact sheet is quite taken with the case of the cat that lapped up a heavy dose of LSD in her milk. When she was confronted with a laboratory mouse, she got badly scared. The Corps goes on to report, moreover, that in other experiments, turned-on cats—far from fearing the mouse—“appear to show a deep affection for it, and mother it as a kitten.” Weapons that create love between natural enemies certainly are not dependable.

VII. A Head-Shrinker’s Confession

Any psychiatrist can request LSD for use with his patients, but few do. The psychiatrist is too insecure socially to be a pioneer in such work: he has barely emerged from his “head-shrinker” status. Why should a psychiatrist stick his neck out for the sake of therapeutic inquiry? Somebody might accuse him of practicing alchemy. And the psychiatrists are not soothed by reading what some of the LSD travelers report. Take the

case of Wilson van Dusen, who reported in 1961, as a psychologist at the Mendocino State Hospital in California: "I spent my first three LSD sessions discovering my life was arranged in layers. The outermost and most superficial was my position and concerns as a psychologist. These seemed unimportant. The papers on my desk were nonsense. Status-striving was no more meaningful than walking up hill." Where would our civilization be if we took such an attitude? No professional man is playing fair when he publicly confesses that his work is superficial. Certainly van Dusen's put-down of status-striving is a bit negligent, considering that part of the psychotherapist's job is to get the patient "adjusted" to the society in which he lives.

Psychedelic therapy, according to an article in the *Journal of Neuropsychiatry* in 1962, "places major responsibility clearly on the patient and tends to discourage any sort of long-term dependency or transference relationship with the therapist." This doesn't sit well with all psychoanalysts. At a recent Big Sur symposium on LSD, a young mother told how her Jungian analyst had opposed her plan to take the LSD trip. "The Jungians," she said, "think it is better to do it yourself, even if you have to spend your life suffering. I had one LSD experience and, aside from childbirth, it is the most significant thing that has happened in my life." To complain that the LSD route is "unnatural" (and therefore wicked) is like saying you are cheating if you let the doctor give you tranquilizers or morphine when you are dying of cancer. To complain that LSD experiences have been induced only by suggestion is like telling Robert Graves that the sublimities that come to him in poetic trance are counterfeit.

. . . and beyond

VIII. "I Fly, I Fly!"

LSD is only the beginning. Experimenters are hard at work on new ways of expanding the feeble consciousness of mid-20th century man—ways that make LSD seem *derrière garde*. One of the more spectacular is yagé (pronounced yah-hey), a drug made by boiling stalks of the Banisteriopsis jungle creeper with leaves of another plant.

Judging from the accounts of sophisticated Chileans who took the drug, it makes you behave as a Cro-Magnon man might, if he had behind him, as a remote memory, the refinements and habits of a modern city-dweller. With LSD the ego, even as it dies and is reborn, is central to the action. Yagé, acting with the authority and weight of a Titan's hand, simply lifts you out of your ego, and sometimes out of your species. You wrestle with wild beasts, and at times you are a beast or a serpent or a huge bird. Sometimes you are a clairvoyant, seeing persons enormously distant from you. Sometimes you behave like an astral body. Or, if you find yourself in a Pleistocene environment, you feel quite at home there, and it is a relief, after years of trying to believe that freeways and other modern amenities are for the good of Man. A Chilean engineer who took a sizeable dose of yagé, cut with mescaline, reported: "I was turning into a winged being. . . My wings were growing and as they did, my feeling of freedom increased, as if I had been imprisoned during my entire lifetime, and I suddenly had organs that made it possible for me to expand. . . I timidly began to move my wings. I felt the movements of flying clearly: how the wing rested on the resisting air, and how a wave of motion went from the tip to the other end, permitting me to lift the body. And I said, 'I fly, I fly!' And I felt the air coming into my mouth, caressing my whole body, and saw the perspective of the earth." The absolutism of this experience is

typical to yagé; all the senses are mandated into the visions. What happens during the eight hours of its effect is remembered as though it were a conventional part of past happenings.

Yagé (or ayahuasca, or caapi) was discovered in 1956 by Michael J. Harner, an American anthropologist, while doing field work among the Jivaro Indians in the Amazon. It was introduced to modern society by Dr. Claudio Naranjo, a Chilean psychiatrist who visited the jungles of southeastern Colombia with a batch of LSD and told the Indians: “I am a shaman (tribal doctor-priest) and I have here magic that I would like to trade for some of your magic.” Potions were exchanged, and Naranjo returned to Santiago to begin a series of experiments with his patients, most of whom had previous experience with LSD.

Dr. Naranjo reports that although the yagé subject usually appears to be in a self-contained reverie, his condition “neurologically is more like a state of alertness, in that the EEG recordings show the disappearance of alpha waves when the patients have their eyes closed.” The mind is immensely active.

Frequently there are myth-like engagements with wild beasts or large serpents. “At first, many tiger faces,” said an attractive, 25-year-old Chilean magazine writer. “Panthers and all kinds of cats. Black and yellow. Then the tiger. The largest and strongest of all. I know (for I read his thoughts) that I must follow him. I see the plateau. He walks with resolution in a straight line. I follow, but on reaching the edge and perceiving the brightness, I cannot follow him. . . Above the luminescence rises a statue of the Virgin with the Child in her arms, ascending from the hole into the sky.” The introduction of the Virgin into this scene surprised the patient: she had for several years ceased to practice her Catholic religion. Now she wears a cross around her neck.

IX. In the Belly of a Serpent

Sometimes the yagé engagement is as elementary as a medieval dragon fight. Witness the experience of a middle-aged psychologist: “I struggled for one very bad hour with a boa constrictor. I must have sweated away a quart of liquid. Finally I had to give up, and I prepared to be swallowed. I went into his belly, and found myself not only alive, but comfortable, and I felt great beauty in being in the serpent’s rhythm and moving in his way, undulating over the earth. After a while I merged with his belly lining, and at last I became that serpent. The marvelous, slow rhythm of his great muscles was my own rhythm.” This man’s yagé experience, given under the supervision of Dr. Naranjo, led him to take necessary concrete steps in his life that his neurosis had prevented him from doing. Neither conventional nor LSD therapy had been able to bring him to this point.

Even metaphysical experiences under yagé seem to be more concrete. A woman subject reported: “My soul is a sphere of some seven centimeters in diameter—pure energy; and it rotates on itself at such enormous speed that it would be the same if it didn’t.” A 21-year-old male journalist reported: “If I was going to leave the body, that didn’t worry me. I knew that I existed in essence, and this was the ideal state, with no skin, no liver, no resentments, atemporal.” Death is experienced frequently. A man saw how his body was “carried across fields of rice in Korea or China, on a stretcher, between two men, coolies perhaps, and I could see my face, once more from the outside and very close. It was like tanned leather. . . covered with droplets of blood.”

Seven of the 32 urban Chileans who took yagé in Santiago had intimate experiences of tigers, jaguars and leopards, very much like those reported by the Amazon Indians in their routine use of the brew. None of them had ever been near a jungle. Dr. Naranjo believes that, with his patients, the beasts often stood for “a fluid synthesis of aggression and grace

and a full acceptance of the life-impulse beyond moral judgment.” In therapy, he tries to persuade his patients to pursue their encounters with animals, because he believes these are creative forces within them. He said one man told him, “I experienced what a tiger feels when looking at its prey.” This possessed man, during his yagé experience, stared hard from hungry eyes at the jugular vein of a woman physician in attendance. She fled from the room.

Yagé, when used in “a cocktail” with LSD, can evoke simultaneously the archetypal experiences of the newer drugs, and the personal recall associated with LSD. One 24-year-old Chilean man who mixed the two agents reported seeing “a huge gate behind which were terrible secrets. I saw a gigantic crab’s leg move over the top of the gate, and heard a terrible fight between two giant crabs. I was frightened and became like a two-year-old. I saw the gate now at the head of a long, long flight of white marble steps. I walked upward, seeing that the gate was open.

“I saw my mother and father in bed together, and I saw on my mother’s face all the experiences she had had in her secret sexual world. This was terrible and wonderful for me, for in my house sex had always been non-existent.”

Yagé, like the old-fashioned psychedelic drugs, has alkaloid bases. It can be synthesized. It is hard to see how America’s adventurous young chemists will not soon have it in general use on the nation’s college campuses. Meanwhile, researchers in Hawaii have found that the seeds of a common tropical wood rose (*argyreia nervosa*) are perhaps the best plant source yet discovered for their various alkaloids—new and perhaps more potent tools for exploring the uncharted regions of the mind.



Notes on Contributors

Ric Amante lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. His most recent fiction appeared in *Cenacle* | 61 April 2007. It was long overdue, this stab at telling tales in prose, the raconteur of many blessed boozy nights of yore finally taking form on the printed page, toward what ends perhaps he doesn't even know as yet.

Donovan Bess was born in Iowa in 1909. He wrote novels, worked for newspapers and magazines, and covered the psychedelic scene in San Francisco. He died in Luxor, Egypt, in 1990. His live-from-the front-lines *Ramparts* essay reprinted in this issue of *The Cenacle* also appears in the Burning Man Books 2007 anthology, *Infinite Coicidence: A Ninth Anthology of Writings about Psychedelics*.

Nemo Boko lives in Eugene, Oregon. His artwork last appeared in *The Cenacle* | 59 | October 2006. His is the first full-color artwork to appear on *The Cenacle*'s back cover. The result of Scriptor Press acquiring a color laser printer and Nemo's fantastic art being so good that full color is the best choice possible. Nemo's art can be found at <http://www.nemo.org>. Cheers, brother!

Emma Brochier lives in Eugene, Oregon. Her artwork last appeared in *The Cenacle* | 59 | October 2006. Her color front cover for this issue of *The Cenacle* is the second in the periodical's history (the first was *Cenacle* | 24-25 | Winter 1998). Her art generates deep psychedelic vibrations, a complex symbology, mind's push, fear, the pulsing that is life pushing and pushing out and further and further. Sometimes terrifying.

Judih Haggai lives at Kibbutz Nir Oz in Israel. Her poetry is a regular feature in *The Cenacle*. When the summer comes, she travels, she stretches out, leaves for awhile her classroom and lives a different warp of hours for awhile. New writing, happily, comes as much from this time as her teacherly days.

Joyce Carol Oates was born in Lockport, New York in 1938. Long considered a modern master of both short and long fiction, and one whom KS greatly admires, it came time this year to find a piece from her work to appear in the *Burning Man Books* series. "The Witness" emerged as best from among many, many short stories reviewed this spring.

Kassandra Soulard lives in Seattle, Washington. This month she graduated from Antioch University in Seattle with a Liberal Arts degree in Social Justice. Without certainty in her own path, she has nonetheless inspired belief in others that it will indeed be a fine, smart, open-hearted one.

Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Seattle, Washington. There are issues of this publication that struggle worse to final fruit than others. The years bring all kinds. This issue comes toward the end of Scriptor Press's second sojourn in Seattle. What next . . . what next indeed? Movement, change, the ever hustle of genes for solid ground and joy.

